
A CELEBRATION OF LIFE



An Introduction to Practice at
The Nityananda Institute



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Our practice is the pursuit of truth, the pursuit of knowledge and understanding about the basis of your life. It requires that you look deeply within yourself. When you do, you will discover something worth knowing. You won't need to take anyone else's word for it; you yourself will experience what is worth pursuing and cultivating and developing.

Isn't that why you have come to the Institute? You are here because somehow you sense that there is something of great value within you that you would like to know more about. You have come to discover more about meditation and to connect to that which is valuable and beautiful within you and to acquire some simple tools and a personal understanding to help you remain in contact with it.

--- Swami Chetanananda

HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

Welcome to the Nityananda Institute. During the introductory class, you learned a method for realizing your highest spiritual potential and a set of techniques that support that method. Most importantly, your instructor lead you through an experience of this method, an experience of your own quiet center.

This handbook is designed to supplement the introductory class. In addition to a detailed review of the method and techniques you were taught, the handbook gives you background material on the origins and sources of our practice, as well as specific information on schedules, fees, and protocols. Also included are resource materials: a glossary of unfamiliar terms, English and Sanskrit, and an annotated bibliography for further reading.

All of this may seem a little daunting at first -- there are so many things to remember, to do -- but the good news is that over time, all of these seemingly different pieces blend into an integrated understanding. We come to realize that there is only one thing to know: our own essence and the essence of the entire universe are one thing, and this one thing is conscious, free, joyful, and infinite. And we come to know that there is only one thing to do: release tensions and allow the creative energy to flow.

As we practice, all the terms, techniques, and concepts merge into a daily experience that is, quite simply, extraordinary and completely satisfying. We experience our life as a single, whole, living event. We are filled with a sense of total well-being and feel connected with our lives. We enjoy ourselves more, our jobs more -- whatever we may do. We serve those whose lives we touch with fullness and simplicity.

It gives us great pleasure to share with you something of the extraordinary practice and teaching given by our teacher, Swami Chetanananda. We look forward to participating with you on this remarkable journey of Self-discovery.

THE INTRODUCTORY INSTRUCTORS



PART ONE: Our Practice and Our Understanding

OUR PRACTICE

A Celebration of Life
Our Objective is to Realize Our Highest
Potential
Our Method is to Release Tensions and Allow
the Creative Energy to Flow
The Teacher is the Means
This Understanding Frees Us

OUR UNDERSTANDING

The Ocean of Consciousness
The Teacher and Shaktipat
Kundalini Yoga and Kashmir Shaivism
The Importance of Direct Experience

OUR LINEAGE

Bhagavan Nityananda
Rudi (Swami Rudrananda)
Swami Chetanananda (Swamiji)



Come to the semna,
come, come again.
Even if you have broken your vows a thousand times,
come, come again.
Ours is not a caravan of despair.

--- Rumi
13th century Sufi mystic poet

How would you feel if you knew, unshakeably,
that your own internal individual
consciousness was infinite in nature? Why then
would you worry? What pain would distract you?
--- Swami Chetanananda

OUR PRACTICE

A Celebration of Life
Our Objective is to Realize Our Highest
Potential
Our Method is to Release Tensions and Allow
the Creative Energy to Flow
The Teacher is the Means
This Understanding Frees Us

A Celebration of Life

Our practice is a celebration of life, a
celebration of creativity and creative energy. It is a
celebration of the infinite creative power that is
individualized in every human being, a joyful
recognition of every human being's complete unity in
Life Itself. Our practice is not a rejection of
anything. In celebrating the infinite nature of our
individual consciousness, we also recognize that each



individual is endowed with power and freedom: the free power of choice.

Our practice is to exercise and fully realize that freedom, allowing each of us to unfold our own highest potential. To this end, we share this practice with you as part of our own celebration: we share with you the tools to develop and unfold your own creative capacity, when and as you choose. We celebrate the capacity within each of us to reach our highest potential: to recognize that our true nature is unlimited and free.

Our Objective is to Realize Our Highest Potential

Only the light of the heart truly exists, ...
and quivering, it unfolds the universe.

---Maharthamanjari, sutra 11

Ordinarily, we are so caught up in our everyday tensions and concerns that we neglect to step back and consider what our ultimate potential and true nature might be. We tend to think of ourselves as limited, finite, physical entities whose spiritual yearnings are simply a dream. But spiritual practice teaches us to recognize that our true nature is an infinite, conscious, and joyful potency. And further that this potency is not different from Life Itself.

Just as a wave is not different from the ocean, each of us is not different from the conscious, creative vitality that is continually creating and re-creating

the universe. This is a radical understanding, very different from our usual "purposeful" activity. It means that there is nothing to attain, nothing to get from outside. It means the objective of our spiritual practice is simply to allow our own true nature to unfold -- to awaken and arouse and cultivate the blossoming of the Self. Realization is not attaining something that is missing or outside ourselves. It is not the reward for anything. It is a simple, intuitive insight into the nature of our own heart. It is a release, a liberation -- a celebration of Life.

Our Method is to Release Tension and
Allow the Creative Energy to Flow

When we are tense and closed, the energy which is our creative potential lies buried within us, as inaccessible as the water in a frozen stream. Over time, our own instincts for avoiding pain combine with the inevitable difficulties of external circumstances to form patterns of rigidity -- we put up walls and barriers, thinking they will protect us. We call this process crystallization. We experience the blocked or obstructed energy as tension; we feel angry, sad, anxious -- the list is almost endless. We can become prisoners of the tension in our lives, of these patterns of crystallization. Our minds close. Our hearts close.



We become narrow and rigid. There is little flow in us anymore, and the living Presence that is the Self is obscured by the accumulation of layer upon layer of pattern and habit, fear and reaction -- layer upon layer of tension.

But if this tension is indeed nothing but energy locked into a pattern, then there must be a way to dissolve the pattern and release the energy. This way is the central method of our practice: to release tensions and allow our creative energy to flow freely and nourish every aspect of our lives. It is a simple approach that is deeply challenging.

The Teacher is the Means

Gururupayah. [The guru is the means.]
--- Shiva Sutras, II.6

It is here that the presence of a living teacher in our lives becomes essential. The teacher serves as a visible, living example of the extraordinary possibilities of human existence. He(*) demonstrates the remarkable quality of a life lived in the continual recognition of one's own true nature. The attitude of unwavering love and respect which a realized person

* The spirit knows no gender; by the same token, "the teacher" also is a genderless term. For simplicity and out of respect for our teacher, Swami Chetanananda, we use the masculine pronoun.



brings to his dealings with every human being, and the powerful creative energy which characterizes his presence, energizes the student's own system, releases the student's tensions, and allows for the possibility of openness and growth. Association with the teacher provides the nourishment and stability we need for our own evolvment.

Through our relationship with the teacher, we come to understand our true nature. We learn to turn our attention within and become quiet. In that stillness, we come to understand the infinite nature of our own individual consciousness and the infinite vitality that is its substance.

This Understanding Frees Us

You are free. This is your condition. Suspend your disbelief and examine the possibility that this is so.

--- Swami Chetanananda

Our practice is not to attain something we don't already have. It is to facilitate the unfolding of what is already within us. We are not born into Life, we emerge from Life, just as a leaf emerges from the tree. The power of Life is our essence. By consciously relaxing and allowing our creative energy to flow, we discover what life really is and who we really are. This understanding frees us. It frees our creative

energy. No doctrine is needed -- just a handful of concepts, a simple training, lots of practice, and a deep wish to grow. Over time these allow us to become established in the experience ourselves, to know the truth for ourselves: that we are conscious, free, joyful and infinite.



Return to the Self within,
know your own secret,
the universe is inside you,
you are inside the universe.
The inner Self is the One who dances in all,
the One who is here and the One who is there.

Bhagavan Nityananda
Sutra 65

I went down to the beach to see the ocean, but I
couldn't see it because the waves were too high.

A Student

OUR UNDERSTANDING

The Ocean of Consciousness
The Teacher and Shaktipat
Kundalini Yoga and Kashmir Shaivism
The Importance of Direct Experience

The Ocean of Consciousness

The same supreme power that has poured forth the whole universe is the essence of our individual consciousness. What does this mean? We test the limits of language when we attempt to describe this infinite nature of Consciousness -- the Self. To give us an image for discussion, Consciousness is frequently compared with the ocean.

Imagine yourself out on the ocean on a calm day. The ocean appears still and unchanging. Yet, in fact, the ocean is never still; it is never inert. It is a



vital, pulsating event that continuously expresses itself through movement. This movement creates variations in the water, in its direction, speed, and temperature. We see waves, currents, and eddies.

As you watch, you see the waves gently rising and falling. They appear to be entities in themselves, separately cresting and breaking. But are they separate? Are they ever different from the water? Is the water ever different from the ocean?

It is the same with the ocean of Consciousness, the Self. The Self is the consistent medium, a vast ocean of potential, interacting with itself and within itself, giving rise to all manifestation. Major and minor variations -- universes, epochs, individuals -- arise and subside, materialize and de-materialize continuously. The only constants are the movement and the medium itself, as currents give rise to currents within currents within currents. It is all part of the dynamic vitality we call Consciousness or the Self, and each of us is like a wave on the surface of this ocean. We arise from it and subside back into it. We are an extension of Consciousness and not in any way different from it.



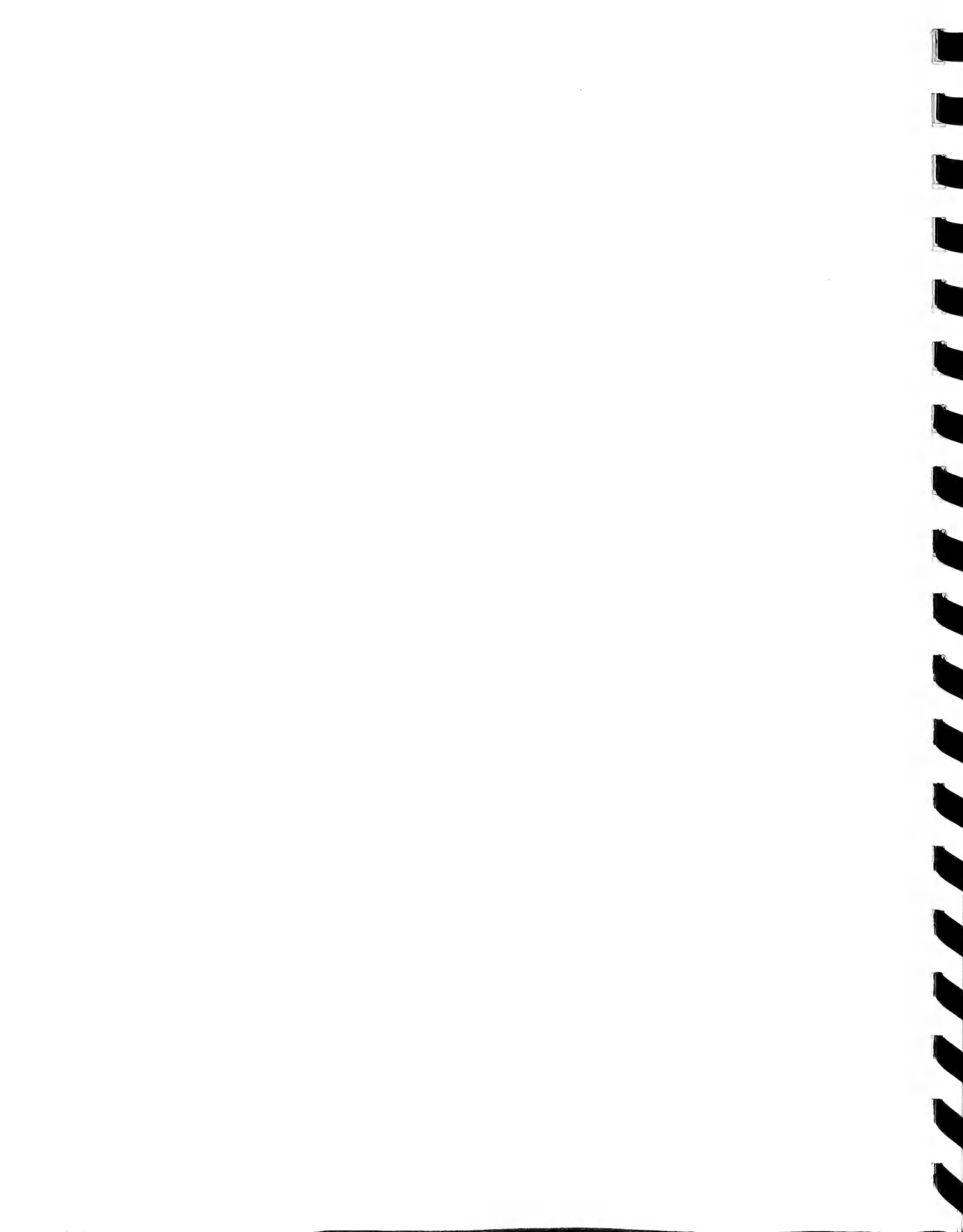
The Teacher and Shaktipat

How can we begin to contact this subtle unity while living in the apparent duality of everyday life? We first contact that unity in the person of the living teacher. In the field of the living teacher, all apparent dualities are resolved. The teacher embodies both our means and our objective. Fully established in Consciousness, the teacher imparts the experience of the unity of Life to the student. This process is called shaktipat.

Shaktipat is the transmission of the teaching (or the energy). It awakens the full power of Life within us. Swamiji has put it this way:

Shaktipat is the arousing of the kundalini -- the individual life force --within a person. That is the beginning of the transmission of the teaching, which is nothing more than the experience of the unity of all things and its fundamental state of total well-being.

This vital energy is the day-to-day expression of the teacher and is so abundant in him that it can be transmitted through the look, touch, thought, or word. It is like a desert rain storm -- before the rain, the seed lies dormant in the dry sand. But when the rain touches the seed, it is awakened and grows. The teacher's awareness is like that rain: it touches the seed of our sleeping awareness and draws the power of Life from the seed.



When shaktipat touches us, it opens our mind, heart, and consciousness, and allows us to become deeply centered. In time, fears, doubts, and tensions are washed away by the river of energy called shaktipat. The inner freedom made possible by this continuous flow allows each of us to experience growth in all levels of our life. It is by the power of shaktipat that we have the opportunity to come to know the inner Teacher and to develop a deep understanding of our own true nature as infinite Consciousness.

Imagine a fountain that has been covered, over time, with a pile of rocks. The water continues to flow from the fountain, but it trickles out in a diffuse pattern. The fountain represents our creative potential and the rocks are our tensions. A spiritual teacher does not change our nature, he simply allows us to be ourselves. The teacher doesn't try to change the fountain, he just removes the rocks -- the tensions -- so the water can again rise up and express its true nature. And this nature, in us, is infinite and universal.



Kundalini Yoga and Kashmir Shaivism

Over the ages, many names have been given to the universal essence: Pure Consciousness, the Absolute, Shiva/Shakti, Universal Energy, Life Itself, God, the Ultimate Reality. On a personal level, our own individualized creative energy is called kundalini. Whatever we may call it, the fundamental reality remains the same: when we penetrate into the core of our individual being, we contact the infinity that is the essence of everything. This is the heart of our practice, a practice rooted in the ancient philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism and the practice of kundalini yoga.

From the seventh to the eleventh centuries A.D., the north-Indian province of Kashmir was a meeting ground for some of the most careful and sophisticated spiritual practitioners of that time. These scholar-practitioners were deeply involved in observing, identifying, and articulating their inner experience. While much of their discussion was built on teachings of great antiquity (scholars date some texts as early as 6,000 B.C.), these men and women actively pursued new discussion and refined understanding of the deepest aspects of inner life. Through the intensity of their practice of kundalini yoga and the careful observation of their own experience, they evolved the practice and philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism.

In the language of this philosophy, pure potential is called Shiva, and the pure vitality that is its power of expression is called Shakti. To express this intimate relationship, Shiva (the male principle) and Shakti (the female principle) are often portrayed in Indian art and literature as the divine couple. Shiva and Shakti are the two infinitely interpenetrated aspects of Consciousness.

The Importance of Direct Experience

Kashmir Shaivism started from the understanding that any spiritual teaching is fundamentally not articulated in books or with words. A spiritual teaching is very simply heart to heart and spirit to spirit. It is at once personal -- the deepest, most personal, intimate thing that there is about us -- but at the same time, totally transcendent. So the whole system stands on, essentially, the awakening of this creative energy within us and its transmission as a nonverbal event. Books can tell us about it, words can sort of lead us to it, but it is only from within ourselves, in silence, that we really connect to it and that it reaches deeply inside us.

-- Swami Chetanananda

An important distinction between our practice and others is that the primary authority of Kashmir Shaivism and kundalini yoga rests firmly on individual direct experience.

Unlike systems that rely primarily on either scriptural authority or strict logic and reason, Kashmir

Shaivism and our daily practice express the direct, personal experience of its practitioners -- from the ancient scholars of India to you and me. We are never asked to accept anything on any basis other than our own direct, individual experience. We are encouraged to explore the teachings and test and retest them every day in our own practice.

This simple approach is profoundly different from filling up our heads with ideas. Our goal is to experience, firsthand, the infinite nature of the inner Self. One word for that experience is meditation.

Swamiji describes it this way:

Within each of us there is a tangible, palpable, but very subtle and fine experience that has nothing to do with our mind or our emotions. It's an experience that we observe and cultivate. And in cultivating this experience, our knowledge about ourself and about life, and our capacity to deal with ourself and life, is profoundly changed and expanded. Meditation is simply the cultivation of our awareness of the Self -- of the infinite nature of our own individual consciousness. Meditation is our vehicle for being in touch with our source, our strength, with the power of Life Itself.

Lineage is not material; it is not conferred like a diploma. Lineage is a field of spiritual energy, a connection to timelessness and to the divine Presence that is all pervasive. Lineage is like a current in the ocean of consciousness, a flow of grace that transcends time and space.

--- Swami Chetanananda

OUR LINEAGE

Bhagavan Nityananda
Rudi (Swami Rudrananda)
Swami Chetanananda (Swamiji)

Our Lineage

In our tradition of Kashmir Shaivism, it is often stated that without a proper teacher, a student cannot attain the realization he or she seeks. This is not an unfamiliar notion. No college student would ever commit to a serious study of nuclear physics, for example, without the benefit of a qualified teacher. Similarly, we turn to a living spiritual teacher to assist us on our path to spiritual freedom.

Just as the physics teacher represents decades of learning and experimentation that have been passed to him, so the spiritual teacher embodies the understanding and experience of his entire lineage, thousands of years of introspection and self-discovery. Because of this, he can guide the student through the many physical, mental and emotional, and spiritual experiences that occur along the way.



A true spiritual teacher speaks to your heart, your inner core, not just your mind. Listen and evaluate with your whole being. A true spiritual teacher always relates from the Self, from selflessness. The experience and realization of Life's unity allows no other possibility. This selflessness is evidenced by the fact that a teacher will always promote the best interests of the student. He gives and returns, informs and nourishes, listens and responds. The example that a teacher sets is an inspiring clarity in the otherwise confusing state of life. The student may recognize that clarity in an instant or realize it over a period of time. Whichever your case, in searching for a true teacher, listen for your own quiet but emphatic "yes."

Bhagavan Nityananda

Nityananda (respectfully called Bhagavan or Swami) lived in southwest India from about the turn of the century to 1961. Details of his early life are hard to verify, but from the 1920s til his death in 1961 he was surrounded by an ever-increasing number of disciples and devotees. By the late 30s, he was established in Ganeshpuri, in the countryside near Bombay, and an active ashram developed around him.



Nityananda was well-known in the districts of Maharashtra and Karnataka, where he is still revered as a great saint, but it is hard to describe his greatness to most Westerners, since his achievements were all interior. It is a matter of spirit. Thousands flocked to the remote jungle of Ganeshpuri, which was hardly even a village when Nityananda settled there in about 1936. Why did they come? Certainly not because it was easy, since conditions were harshly primitive, and Nityananda rarely spoke. They came simply to be in his presence (to have his darshan), and they were satisfied.

Such a holy man is called an avadhut in Sanskrit -- a living miracle of pure consciousness in human form. Timeless and eternal, the avadhut is a direct link to the Absolute, containing all teachers who went before him and all who follow. The grace of the avadhut Nityananda flows in our lineage.



Rudi (Swami Rudrananda)

One of the thousands who visited Ganeshpuri was Rudi. Born Albert Rudolph on January 24, 1928, in Brooklyn, Rudi had been actively pursuing his spiritual development for many years. In India at thirty-one, he was at a crossroads when an associate took him to Ganeshpuri, and Nityananda. He wrote of that meeting: "My first meeting, in India in 1958, with the great Indian saint Bhagavan Nityananda, was of such depth that it changed the course of my life."

One of the first Americans to be recognized as a Swami, Rudi was a totally new spiritual manifestation: A fiery fusion of East and West whose only interest was the inner transformation of growth and transcendence. Swami Chetanananda wrote of Rudi: "Years of study with great teachers of several traditions impressed on him the need to separate the essence of a teaching from its cultural trappings. Rudi's tremendous depth of inner effort dissolved all static concepts into a creative awareness that meets each moment with disciplined spontaneous originality."

Rudi's teachings continue to touch us through his recorded works and through his student and successor, Swami Chetanananda.



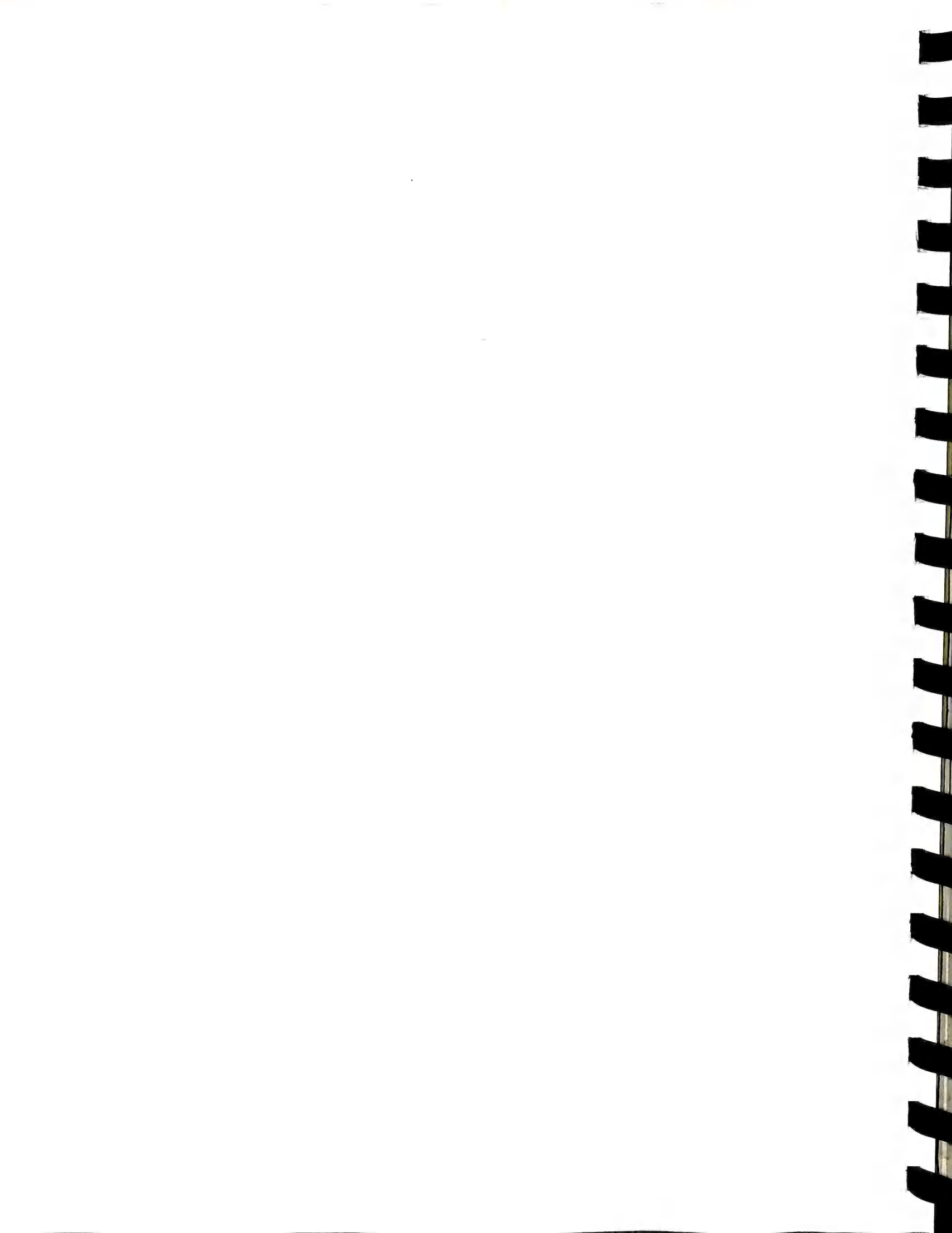
Swami Chetanananda (Swamiji)

In 1971, an acquaintance gave Swamiji a picture of Rudi and suggested that he go to New York to meet him. For reasons that weren't entirely clear to him, Swamiji made the trip:

A very odd thing happened when I met Rudi. I walked into his store and I looked at him, and I felt my heart shatter in a thousand pieces. I felt literal, physical cracks going through my chest. I never had one second's doubt about the powerful experience that I was entering into.

Since that momentous meeting in 1971, Swamiji has touched the lives of thousands of students and friends. After Rudi's death in 1973, Swamiji became the head of the ashram organization Rudi had begun. On May 14, 1978, Swamiji was initiated as a Swami, taking the name Chetanananda and formalizing his unwavering commitment to spiritual growth. In 1982, Swamiji moved to Cambridge, and the Nityananda Institute established Cambridge as both its administrative and residential headquarters.

The opportunity for an immediate, personal relationship with a true teacher is a rare and precious treasure. In Swamiji's own words, describing his relationship to Rudi:



In the classical philosophy, the two [student and teacher] are seen as symbolic of the two fundamental aspects of life itself. Both are understood to be manifestations of God, one supporting the other, one existing only in the context of the other. The kind of love, openness, and deep sharing or transmission of this extraordinary but very simple teaching, and the growth that it brings about in people, is something that is a totally mysterious process. I hope you all have the opportunity to experience it, because I have never seen anything greater in the world.

PART TWO: Method, Techniques, and Applications

OUR METHOD AND TECHNIQUES

- Meditation
 - Wish to grow
 - Exercise
 - Reflections
- Breath, Chakras, Flow, and Presence
 - Stages of Unfoldment
 - The Breath Inside the Breath
 - Chakras as Gateways to the Inner Self
 - The Experience of Circulation of Energy
 - The Experience of Total Integration
- The Breathing Exercise
 - Breath
 - Chakras
 - Flow
 - Presence
- Summary of Breathing in Meditation
- Reflections
- Kriyas

PRACTICING TOGETHER, PRACTICING ALONE

- Eyes-Open Class: Transmission
 - Description
 - Reflections
- Closed-Eye Meditation: Practicing and Absorbing
 - Description
 - Reflections

OTHER TECHNIQUES

- Chanting
- Negative Psychic Tension Release Exercise



If you can simply learn to meditate, if you can sit down and train yourself -- train your mind and your emotions, train your attention to look inside, train yourself to be open, to open the chakras to release tensions and allow your own creative energy to flow -- then the flow of this creative energy will unfold and unfold and unfold and uplift you unbelievably. It is a very simple, natural, and incredible work.

--- Swami Chetanananda

OUR METHOD AND TECHNIQUES

Meditation
Your Wish to Grow
Exercise
Reflections

Meditation

The heart of our spiritual practice is meditation -
- not just as an effort we make when we sit for
meditation but as the core of our everyday activities.

Meditation is an experience of the finest level of awareness, the universal pure awareness that is the vitality and foundation of our own individual life and of all of life -- of Life Itself. Meditation is an effortless state that always exists and is never farther away than our next breath. That's why we often say that we don't "do" meditation -- it "does" us. In meditation, our deepest tensions are released and our creative energy is aroused and unfolds. It unfolds within us, and we begin to recognize our inner, pure conscious essence. It unfolds in the context of the



world, and we begin to develop the clarity of mind and insight to move in the world, whatever the circumstances, with equanimity, strength, and generosity. Over time, we become established in and never leave the state of meditation -- we find that we are never not "meditating."

The state of meditation emerges when we become deeply centered within our Self. The techniques that we have, including our breathing exercise and our wish to grow, are tools that help us become centered and stay there. These are powerful techniques and, as you work with them, your body will run hot and cold, and your emotions will wiggle and jiggle all over the place. You will be presented with ten thousand reasons to stop; forty-thousand distractions will come forward to attract your attention. And basically it doesn't matter.

Learning about meditation is a part of the on-going, dynamic discovery of your own true nature. It is your discovery. The grace of the teacher and the techniques of the practice will lead to the door of that discovery and even suggest to you how to open it -- but only you can actually do it, and only you can walk through. The choice is yours to make, at your own pace and of your own free will.



Your Wish to Grow

It is divine Consciousness that made us ask in the first place, so the asking and the receiving take place in the same moment.

--- Swami Chetanananda

In the beginning, it is necessary to cultivate a deep wish to grow, a genuine feeling of yearning for and devotion to growing. Over time, this wish develops into a confidence in and a commitment to your practice. This, in turn, matures into an experience of profound inner peace and total well-being.

So, first you must ask to grow. When you ask deeply to grow, your mind becomes focused one-pointedly in your heart, and you begin to experience a simple, perfectly clear state in which there are no thoughts, no agendas at all. You experience a state of perfect clarity. This perfect clarity exists within the one-pointedness of your wish, underneath all the desires, the pulls and tugs, of your everyday life. It is a clarity that is simple and profound -- the changeless state where growth takes place -- or, more accurately, where growth is totally transcended because everything is already there and already grown.

In this state, all of your worries evaporate; all of your fears are dispelled. In this state, you find

strength, peace, and understanding to face whatever you have to face every single day. This state is your innermost resource, and it is also very much more than just you. The whole reason for focusing on your wish to grow is to become familiar with this one-pointed state and develop an appetite for it.

In wishing to grow, your effort is to focus your mind completely in your heart, without becoming tense or contracted. Don't get caught in the words or the activity. Let it happen in your heart and not in your head. Whatever words you use, your wish to grow is not something that you think but something that you feel emanating from your heart. It has nothing to do with any objective -- it is the process of doing it that reveals the goal.

By asking and asking and asking, your wish penetrates more and more deeply into you, and you develop a visceral connection to the deepest part of you. It is your power of concentration and the depth to which you reach within yourself which allows the emergence of perfect clarity. To quote Swamiji:

In time, your wish to grow will connect you to an extraordinarily powerful, palpable, clear, lucid, transcendent power, the power of Life Itself. And, if you do this a lot, you become established there.



THE WISH TO GROW: An Exercise

Our wish to grow is an important part of our meditation practice, and it must be cultivated. The following exercise will help you do this.

1. Find a comfortable, private place. Sit down and relax. Now silently start repeating to yourself the phrase:

"I wish to grow."

2. Listen to yourself repeat these words. Are you convinced that you really want to grow? Do you believe what you are saying? Maybe not. Note that and continue to repeat the words, focusing on the sincerity behind your wish, on your recognition of your need to grow spiritually.

3. Continue to repeat the words sincerely and one-pointedly in your heart until the very core of you responds. Balance your intensity and sincerity with an attitude of lightness and joy.

Realize that your wish to grow is a mantra. Its power resides in the vibration that is set up by your single-minded and unswerving focus as you repeat your wish again and again.

4. The more closely you can follow the wish and the deeper you can feel it penetrate, the more convinced you will become of your own wish and worthiness to grow, and the more you will benefit from the experience.

5. As you come to the end of your exercise, let the words fall away. Feel deeply into your heart and notice the change in vibration. Take a few moments to let this change be deeply absorbed into your system.

You can practice this exercise as often as you like; once a week for twenty to thirty minutes is suggested.

Reflections

It is important to understand that the center of this asking is not ambition or begging. It is an emphatic statement -- a message you are sending to yourself that states that growing spiritually is a priority in your life, and that you are committed to mobilizing your inner resources.

In making a sincere effort to stay focused on our wish, we permit the energy of our wish to penetrate deeply within us. By our attention, we allow our own inner resources to organize themselves and come to a still point. In that still point, a shift takes place, a shift that releases tension and allows our creative energy to flow. Our inner vibration becomes higher, finer, and lighter. A new space is created that can receive the energy of the Teacher, the energy of Consciousness itself (shaktipat). That is why working with the wish to grow in this way is excellent preparation for sitting with the teacher -- or meeting him for the first time.



The Siddhas have said, "When the breath moves, the mind moves. When the breath is steady, the mind becomes steady." When the movement of the prana stops, the fickleness of the mind vanishes. When the prana becomes balanced, the central nerve unfolds. Then one's own essential nature and the light of knowledge manifest.

-- Lallehwari

BREATH, CHAKRAS, FLOW, AND PRESENCE

Stages of Unfoldment

The Breath Inside the Breath

Chakras as the Gateways to the Inner Self

The Experience of Circulation of Energy

The Experience of Total Integration

Stages of Unfoldment

There are definite stages of awareness that unfold when you begin an introspective practice. The first stage is awareness of the breath. Awareness of the breath quiets the mind and relaxes the body so that both mind and body become a non-issue as you sit in meditation. Then your attention can move to the chakras, the subtle energy centers inside you, gateways to Self.

The second stage of a meditative practice is to take your attention into each of the seven major chakras, develop a sensitivity to the vibration within

it, and begin to experience the subtle expansion that takes place as it starts to open. It is as if each chakra held a single note or tone -- a single resonance -- inside it. As the individual notes become active within us, they start to resonate together, forming chords which in turn resonate together, until we experience the communication between the chakras as the flow of kundalini, the creative energy within each of us. This is the next stage of awareness.

As this inner communication and our awareness of it become stronger, the infinite Presence of the Self asserts itself -- the essence of our existence and of all existence. We experience ourselves beyond time and space, beyond form and movement. We experience ourselves as we really are -- infinite, conscious, joyful, and free.

In the following pages, we review the techniques that take us through the sequence of breath, chakras, flow, and Presence. We also talk about how the sequence is integrated in the breathing exercise you have been taught. You'll notice when we do that we use certain phrases to describe the process of inner development -- "looking" inside, "feeling" inside, observing, cultivating. This is to help you develop a tangible awareness of the process. But please remember that the

process of inner development is highly personal. Your own experience will be the result of your own work. And that work is simply to relax, focus, observe, and be open -- to release tensions and allow the creative energy to flow.

The Breath Inside the Breath

Work to feel the breath inside the breath.
Work to feel the vibration within the chakras
and to experience the subtle expansion.

--- Swami Chetanananda

Breathing is more than a flow of gases moving in and out of the lungs. It is a powerful tool we use to relax the body and quiet the mind. We begin by taking our attention to the breath, relaxing, and feeling its pulsation. Gradually, we become attuned to its simple rhythm.

In the beginning we keep our attention on the breath to help focus the mind. When we focus on our breath, we begin to see that there is a clear relationship between our breathing and the state of our mind. When we are upset, angry, or agitated, our breathing is erratic. While it is difficult to directly confront our mind and gain control over thoughts and feelings, we do have voluntary control over our

breathing. We discover that when we consciously focus on the breath, our mind naturally becomes quiet.

Over time, we come to realize that the breathing we are usually aware of is the physical expression of something deeper. Twelve times a minute, every minute, day after day, a pulsation flows up the length of the spinal column. This pulsation is the power behind the physical breath; it is the breath within the breath, and it goes on as long as we live. What is amazing is that this is the same as the pulsation of all that is. Put a little differently, that pulsation is the breath of Life within us. Remember what it's like to go outside on a cold winter day and see your breath take form? That is what we are. We are nothing more than a form taken on briefly by the breath of God.

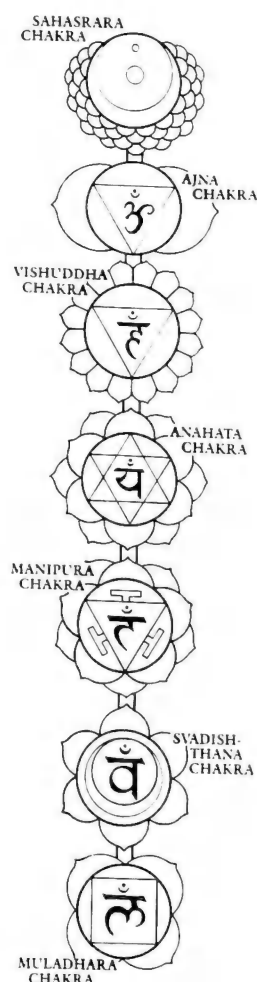
That is why we start by focusing on our breathing -
- to become aware of and understand the flow of the breath inside our breath.

Chakras are the Gateways to the Inner Self

This flow of energy we call the breath (called prana in Sanskrit) is most easily felt at certain energy centers, called chakras.

Chakras are subtle centers which you experience when your system is highly energized. Although they are not exactly physical, we experience their energy in

extremely tangible ways. For instance, when you've had a powerful emotional experience, your throat may feel blocked -- you have a "lump in your throat." In moments of extreme anger, the point two fingers below your navel may become completely constricted -- you feel a tightening in the "pit of your stomach." If your heart is closed to something, you may feel unbearable anguish -- a broken heart -- while at other times, your heart suddenly opens, and you feel total joy and well-being. It is our experience of the energy of the chakras that determines our state of mind.



There are three primary channels in the subtle body related to the chakras. The first is called the sushumna, located in the spinal cord. On either side of the sushumna are two other primary channels, the ida and the pingala. These crisscross back and forth. The primary chakras are located at the points where the three cross each other. There are many chakras (the texts of Kashmir Shaivism detail some 72,000 of them), but in our practice we focus on seven.

These are located at the base of your spine, at the base of your sex, in your abdomen (about two fingers below your navel), heart-level in the center of your chest, in your throat, between your eyes, and at the top of your head. Kundalini yoga is the practice by which you cultivate your awareness of these chakras and of the energy flow within and between them.

Flow: the Experience of Circulation of Energy

Through focusing our awareness and through practice, we develop a sensitivity to the flow of the energy down the front of our body through the chakras and then up the spinal column to the top of the head. This is a circuit. We don't create this circuit. It already exists. It simply is. We just work to cultivate our awareness of it.

In the process of doing this, we gradually withdraw our attention from the physical world. When we take our attention inside, we become attuned to the energy which is the support of the physical world. Chakras are the gateways between our inner and outer experiences. Slowly our whole awareness of ourselves changes. We begin to understand ourselves and all other people as nothing but flowing energy. We come to understand all of life and all experience as nothing but an expression of conscious energy. This awareness changes how we feel

about ourselves and completely rearranges our priorities.

Breath is the vehicle for experiencing the flow, or communication, between the chakras. Our inner work really begins to deepen when we can experience the circulation of energy through the chakras. First we focus our attention on the breath, then expand our awareness to include the chakras. We then follow the flow between them, feeling the energy pierce the centers of the chakras, rise up the spinal column to the top of the head, and flow down again.

Feeling the flow between chakras is subtle; it sometimes takes a while to feel anything at all. Don't let this discourage you. Think of it as a thawing-out process, beginning little by little and expanding over time. Imagine it as whispers, rather than bugle calls. Visualize it; hear it; feel it; put all your senses to work as you tune in to this subtle feeling. Your effort is simply to become aware of it, to become quiet enough to hear it.

No matter how long it takes to develop sensitivity to the inner flow, remember that this flow goes on all the time -- even though we may not be fully aware of it. And, as we begin to have an awareness, the experience of this awareness will change over time, then change again, and then again. Finally, even the sense of flow

disappears into the unity of the Self, and we experience a sense of fullness and well-being. We experience Presence.

Presence: the Experience of Total Integration

The realization that you hope to attain you already have.

--- Swami Chetanananda

Finally, through our practice in feeling the chakras and the flow, we come to a perfect understanding of this: that we are really everything that is. There is nothing we have to change, nothing we have to do. There is no place to go. There is only knowing yourself -- knowing the Self.

You may remember that at the beginning of this section, meditation was described not as something we do but as something we experience. When you are in a state of meditation, something special happens. You have a direct experience of the Self. We call this an experience of Presence. A simple deep nourishment flows from this contact that dissolves all boundaries and you experience your Life directly, as it really is. The feeling is one of fullness and ease, quiet and deliciousness -- a sense of total well-being. You

experience the Self directly as it is, infinite and without boundaries. And it all begins with attention to the breath:

Experience the Presence, that universal Presence that you are. It is not a denial of your body. It is a celebration. It is not a denial of your mind. It is the joy within your mind. It is not the end of breathing. It is the very power of the breath. It is a wonderful thing. A person established in the Presence understands the whole world is a celebration -- understands the whole world as an expression of the Love of God.

-- Swami Chetanananda

THE BREATHING EXERCISE

The breathing exercise is the vehicle by which the physical body can be brought to the experience of infinity.

-- Swami Chetanananda

The breathing exercise is an exercise of one movement that has several components to it. As we practice it, we begin to appreciate how one component flows into the other, and how the exercise builds as a total movement.

DESCRIPTION

Start by sitting comfortably with a straight (but not stiff) spine, either cross-legged on the floor or in a chair with your feet flat on the floor. Put your thumb and forefinger together and rest your hands on your thighs, palms up. Relax your body. Keep your chin tilted slightly upward and shoulders slightly back and down.

1. BREATH: Relax the Body, Quiet the Mind

Take your attention inside yourself. Relax your body. Relax every part of your body.

As you relax, your breathing becomes quieter and deeper. Become aware of this breathing. It is the doorway to your quiet, deep inner work.

Observe your breath. Breathe quietly through your nose, feeling your ribs expand as the chest gently fills. Feel your abdomen expand gently as the diaphragm drops. Draw the breath low into the abdomen, relaxing the stomach muscles. Picture the breath rhythmically filling you and flowing out.

Let your own system set the rhythm of the breath as you relax into this steady pulsation of inhale/exhale, expansion/contraction. The whole breath should be easy, smooth, and full.

2. CHAKRAS: Feel, Relax, and Open

The base of your spine rocks gently with each breath. Take your attention to the chakra there, and tune into that rocking, that pulsation, as you breathe. Relax and let the feeling expand. Next move your attention into the chakra at the base of your sex organs. As you breathe, relax and feel an expansion there. Now bring your awareness of your breath into the chakra in the abdomen (about two fingers below the navel). Relax. Feel the expansion. Feel these three lower chakras start to harmonize, synchronize, flow. Relax this whole area.

Move your attention to the heart chakra in the center of your chest. Repeat the same process; use your breath and experience the pulsation of the energy from the base of your spine through the abdominal chakra and up into your heart chakra.

Now feel the throat chakra. Swallow and lift your chin slightly to relax your throat. Feel the chakra between your eyebrows. Breathe into that chakra and feel it expand. Now breathe into the top of your head and relax it. Feel the whole crown of the head opening and expanding.

3. FLOW: Integrating Breath and Chakras through the Double Breath.

Take a deep breath, let it go, and relax. Draw your next breath in high through your nose and let it fill the upper chest. As your breath passes through the throat chakra, swallow to relax it. Breathe all the way in, without forcing. Let the breath fill the chest; relax deeply and allow your heart chakra to expand. Hold the breath until it naturally wants to release itself, then let a small part of it out (about a fifth).

Now breathe in again, this time very deeply into your abdomen. Hold that gently and relax

deeply. Feel an expansion throughout the whole area of your lower abdomen.

Feel the pulsation of energy expand across your lower chakras and into the base of your spine. Slowly release your breath and allow the energy to rise up the spine to the top of the head. Feel the energy resonate there.

4. PRESENCE: Simply Be Aware.

Relax and be aware. Be aware of the breath, the chakras, and the flow giving way to an experience of Presence, the atmosphere of the Self emerging from deeply within you and permeating your awareness. Focus low in the abdomen; breathe, relax, and be aware.

This completes the first cycle of the breathing exercise. After this, keep your breath focused low in your abdomen until you are ready to repeat the double breath (step 3) -- about five or six times in a given forty-minute period, or when you want to sharpen your inner focus. On the next page there is a simple summary of this sequence.

SUMMARY OF BREATHING IN MEDITATION

1. Begin each session by quieting and deepening the breath.
2. Then bring your attention and breath through each chakra from the base of your spine up to the top of your head.
3. Once this is done, as a general rule, keep your attention focused low in your abdomen and breathe gently and deeply.
4. About 5 or 6 times in the course of a meditation session, use the double breath to relax deeply, focus on the flow, and integrate the stages of breath, chakras, and flow into Presence.

Reflections

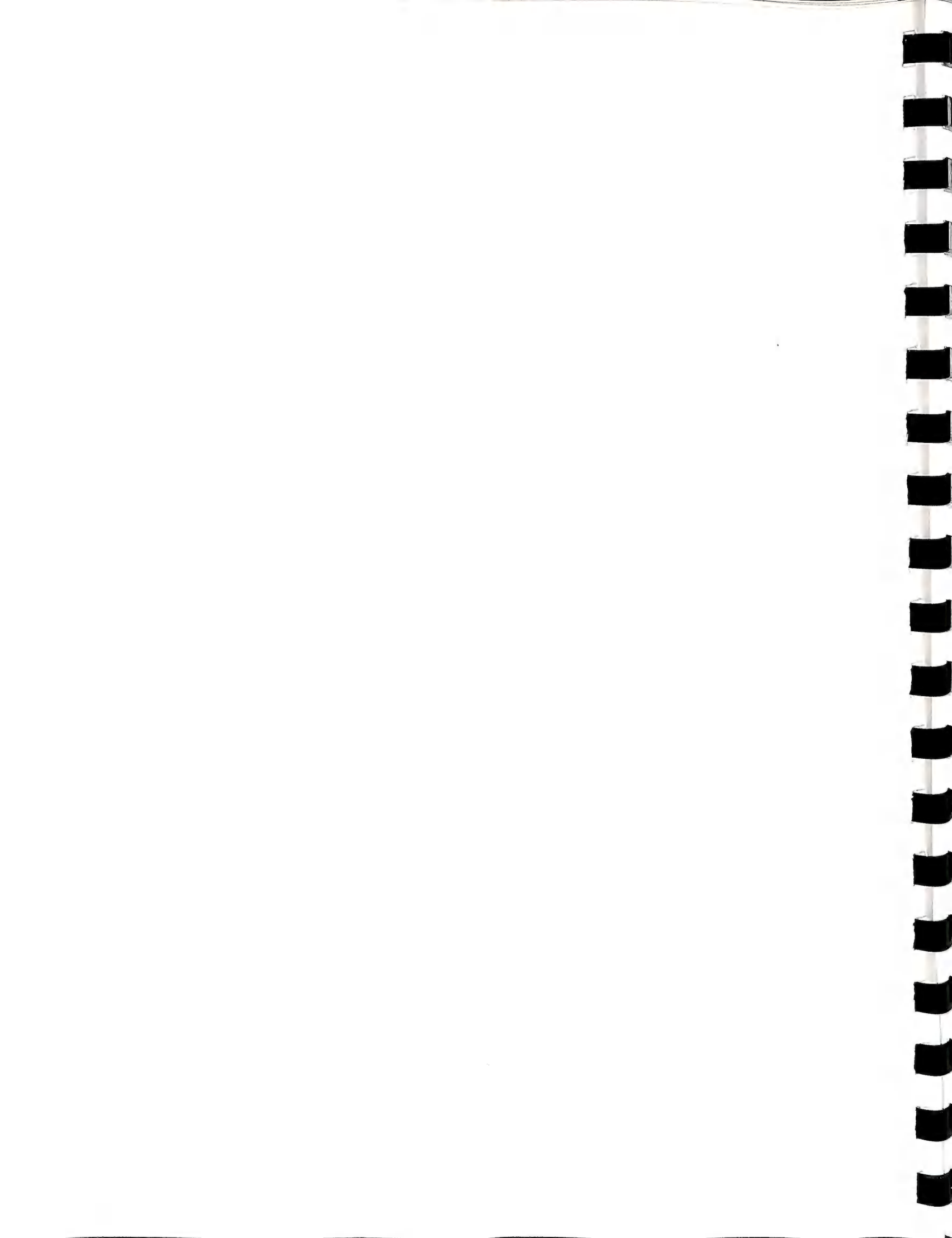
Our breathing exercise is a very powerful tool for deeply changing our chemistry and facilitating the emergence and flow of the creative energy within and around us. It should not be practiced mechanically, but with awareness. Use your wish to grow to open yourself deeply. Use all your senses to connect to this

experience. Visualize the energy flowing between the chakras and up your spine. Visualize the chakras expanding, opening like flowers. Stay conscious of what you are doing and pay close attention to the flow of the breath and the way in which the various components of this exercise are integrated by the double breath, merging together to form a single movement, a unified cycle of energy.

In our kundalini yoga practice, our effort is to awaken each chakra and allow the energy to rise to the highest chakra at the top of the head. This is not like going up a flight of stairs -- moving from one chakra to another chakra and forgetting the one left behind. Instead we move from one chakra to the next, encompassing the second in our awareness of the first, and the third in our awareness of the first and second. In this way, even as we are aware of the awakening taking place in the higher centers, we still experience the flow of creative energy throughout the whole system.

What are kriyas?

A kriya is a spontaneous release of tension that can happen from time to time as we practice. The kriya release is similar to what happens to your arm, for example, when you have put weight on it too long in an awkward position. As soon as you re-situate it in a



more normal position, the flow of blood and fluids is re-established, and you may experience some tingles and twitches as this happens.

In the same way, as we sit in meditation and focus on our breath moving in and moving out, the various tensions inside us start to dissolve, and the circulation begins to be restored to all aspects of our being. As this happens, parts of us that have been locked for a long time may unlock suddenly. You may also become aware of patterns and knots of energy at the levels in the body corresponding to the chakras. There may be changing sensations of dullness, heaviness, tension, light, expansion, electricity, or tingling. You may have a drowsy, sleep-like experience, or you may see or hear things in a dream-like state. Sometimes your body will spontaneously jerk or move, or your breath may suddenly shift and you will make a sound. These are all forms of kriya, occurring naturally as your deep inner tensions begin to dissolve.

If you have this kind of experience, don't let it distract you; just relax and let it pass. Keep it simple; stay quiet, keep your attention inside, regulate your breathing, repeat the SoHam mantra. Return to some of the tools you've been given and keep your energy inside, allowing the process of change that is trying to take place in you to complete itself.

By the same token, if people sitting near you are experiencing kriyas, follow the same guidelines: Keep you attention inside, don't get caught up in their experience, and be at ease that what they are experiencing it healthly and natural.

One other thing: Many people rarely or never experience kriyas in the course of their practice. This is also natural and healthy. The fact is that there is no premium on experiencing or not experiencing kriyas. They just happen -- sometimes.

Summary

Finally, it is a very good thing, on a regular basis, to sit down for a period of 30 to 40 minutes with the express purpose of exploring and practicing the breathing exercise. Mastering this exercise is a key to the state of meditation.

Meditation is the vehicle by which we get in touch with that deepest, finest, innermost power of Life within ourselves and create for it the opportunity to articulate its own nature in all the three worlds of phenomena; that is, in our individual spirit, our mind and emotions, and our body. If we get in touch with that spirit, then changes of a permanent, transforming, uplifting nature take place from the inside out.

--- Swami Chetanananda

PRACTICING TOGETHER, PRACTICING ALONE

Eyes-Open Class: Transmission

Description

Reflections

Closed Eye Meditation: Practice and Absorption

Description

Reflections

Eyes-Open Class: Transmission

With our eyes open, we drink in the appearance of reality.

--- Swami Chetanananda

Our practice at the Nityananda Institute is centered on the teacher as both the living example of our goal and our instrument to reach it. Eyes-open class with the teacher is therefore the central event of our practice. With our attention firmly turned within, we sit with eyes open, focused on the teacher. We are fully present in our surroundings, in touch with the information of our senses, yet continually directing our

awareness inward. Through this open-eyed contact, we begin to have a simple, palpable experience of the vital force that connects all things and that binds us together as one.

The simple unwavering contact between teacher and student in the eyes-open class is the essence of shaktipat. First we establish the feeling of flow within ourselves. Then, we extend that feeling into a connection with the teacher as we meet his gaze. In this silent communion, the essence of the teaching is conveyed. A real transmission takes place -- a transmission of teaching, of energy, of release, of love.

In the student, the fundamental mechanism underlying this transmission is surrender. Surrender is transformation. And the first step is simply a very deep relaxation. Surrender starts as a release, a suspension of our whole package of identifications and beliefs. When we can suspend our disbelief for just a few moments, when we can just be quiet and focus on our breathing and allow the energy to flow, then from within us a real change will take place. A transformation will slowly reveal to us the extraordinary capacities hidden inside each of us. As our tensions dissolve, our creative flow expands joyfully. Finally, even the sense of flow dissolves as we become established in the state

of meditation -- the state we call Presence. The Presence that we enter is our own essence. This essence is the Self, it is the inner Teacher, it is Consciousness, it is Life Itself.

In eyes-open class, all four of the classical means of shaktipat (the transmission of teaching or energy) are engaged. Through the teacher's look, thought, word, and touch our own individual capacity for growth is engaged, aroused, and nourished. Every time this happens, whether you feel something or not, whether you have a dramatic experience or not, you are profoundly changed. This is the miracle of class.

Over time, tensions deeply within us begin to release, and we experience an expanded flow that vitalizes all levels of our existence. We bring this enhanced awareness to even the most powerful dualistic experiences -- experiences that would ordinarily make us feel distinct and separate. Eyes-open class arouses within us a deep sense of that universal Self of which we are each a part and an expression. We experience ourselves as a junction point between inner and outer. Whether you feel it exactly or not, this experience allows your deepest inner potential to begin to unfold.

Description of Open-Eyes Class*

The open-eyes class is our opportunity to participate in the experience of unity and total well-being that is manifest in the form of the teacher. We are interested in the teacher not as a personality but as an energy field.

--- Swami Chetanananda

For many people, meditation with eyes opened and focused on a teacher is a new experience. The following pages describe the form and content of the class.

Preparing for Class

Before the class begins, take the time to sit down, relax your body, and begin to let go. Tune into your breath, focusing on each of the chakras until you feel the flow between them. When chanting begins, feel your breath fall into a natural, deep and full rhythm and feel the sounds of the chant resonate inside you. Begin to feel the sounds resonate in your chakras, visualizing their vibration as part of the flow within you.

Following chanting, Swamiji or his assistant, Steven Ott, will arrive and sit facing us with eyes open. At this point, you may want to close your eyes for a moment to deepen your inner contact. Then you

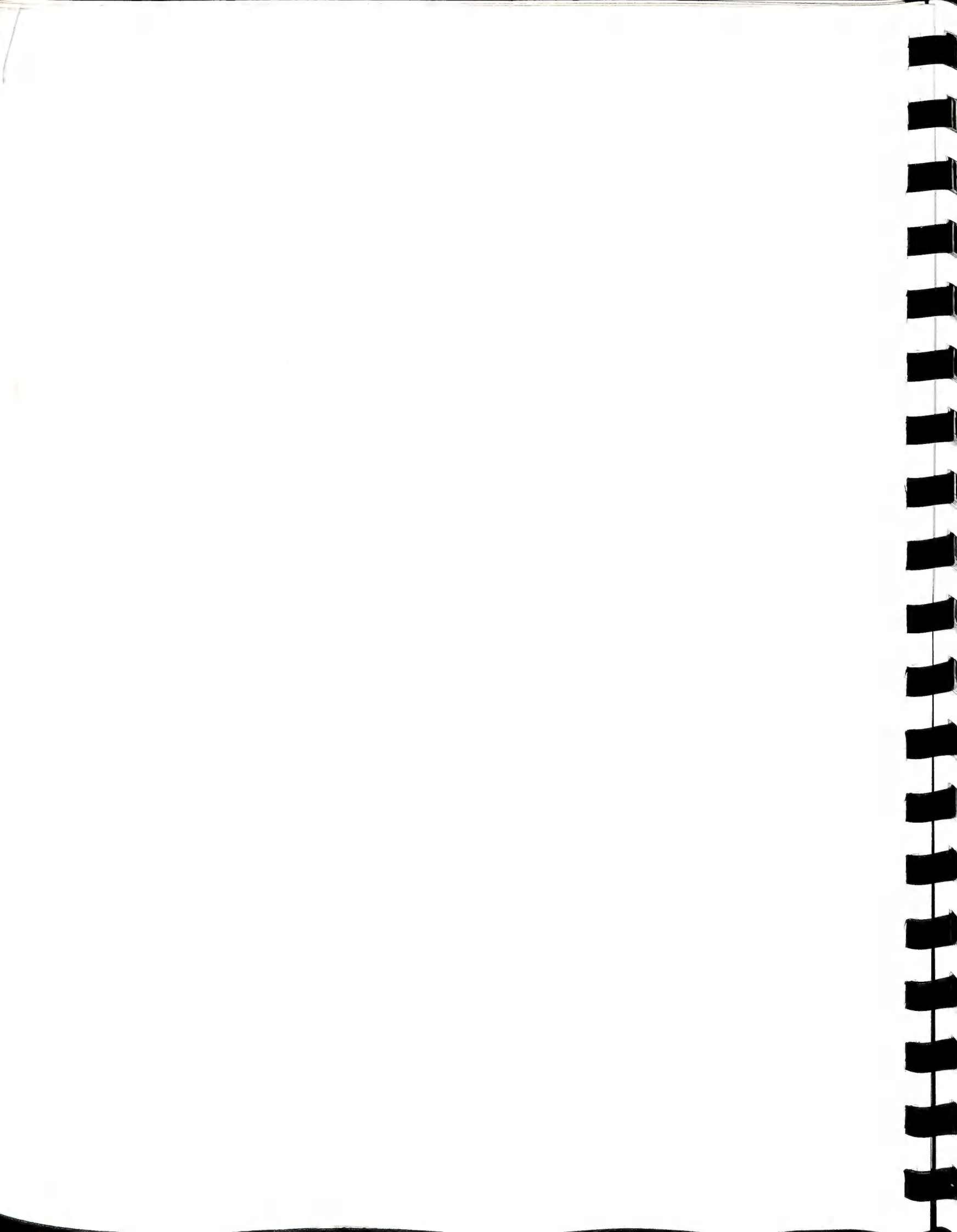
*See General Information section for class times.

should open your eyes and leave them open and in contact with the teacher for the remainder of the class, even when he is not looking directly at you. Since contact through the eyes is an essential part of this class, be sure you are seated where you can see and be seen.

The Student's Effort

The effort of the student in eyes-open class is simple. As eyes-open class begins, you establish an inner connection with the teacher by focusing and steadying your attention one-pointedly on the connection between you. Hold a soft, steady focus on the teacher's eyes while keeping your attention inside. Use the breathing exercise to focus more deeply inside and let your wish sharpen that focus. You may visualize waves of energy emanating from the teacher. Feel the flow of energy between you and envision drawing this flow into yourself. Relax and draw the energy that is class deeply and fully into you. Relax, let go, and continue to work.

The technical foundation of class is the breathing exercise we have just reviewed. Let your breath set a simple rhythm of expansion and contraction as you relax,



open, and deeply release. Over time, you will notice that the differentiation between inner and outer dissolves and a deep sense of oneness, of total well-being, emerges.

You are likely to feel many things as you sit in eyes-open class. You may feel heat, agitation, joy, expandedness, physical tingles, and emotional twitches. You may experience kriyas, spontaneous body movements, or sudden shifts in your breathing pattern. Whatever happens and whatever feeling may arise, your effort is to remain open, relaxed, and quiet. Use your breathing exercise to keep your attention inside as you continue to relax and release. Ask to surrender. Whatever you are feeling, even if you think you are feeling nothing at all, stay with the process, use the techniques you have learned, keep your eyes open and your attention in your heart. Breathe, relax, and be aware. Simply observe your own responses and relax deeply, releasing tension and allowing the creative energy to flow.

Towards The End Of Class

At the end of the eyes-open portion of class, the teacher closes his eyes and the gong is struck once. At this point, you should also close your eyes. Stay

centered, and use this time to begin the process of absorbing and digesting your experience. Allow your gratitude to arise; take time to deeply acknowledge the grace in your life.

When Swamiji teaches, he will often walk around the room at this point, giving students shaktipat by touch. During this, it is important to keep your eyes closed and your attention focused deeply inside, low in your abdomen. Do not be distracted by the responses of others; just continue to stay focused and quiet.

If Swamiji gives a talk, you may open your eyes but keep an inner focus. The gong will be struck seven times when the teacher leaves the meditation room. At that point, continue to relax and absorb the benefits of the class. Stay quiet and inwardly focused for fifteen to twenty minutes after class, keep your interaction with others to a minimum, and remain centered as you move into the balance of your day.

Reflections

These are the technical details of class, but the reality of this experience is much greater than technique. It is an opportunity to engage in and witness the Self as it is manifest during the time spent quietly and deeply with the teacher.

Class is an extraordinary field of energy in which we participate. In this field, our highest experience is of unity and recognition. The Self in us wakes up and recognizes the Self in the teacher. With our eyes open, we come to understand that inner and outer are not at all different; they are one thing only -- one joyous expression of the Self.

Closed-Eye Meditation: Practice and Absorption

Inside you there is a tangible, palpable but very subtle and fine experience that has nothing to do with mind or emotions. It's an experience that we have and we cultivate. And in cultivating this experience, our knowledge about ourselves and about life, and our capacity to deal with ourselves and life, are really profoundly changed and expanded. This is why we sit in meditation -- to cultivate the awareness of the Self. It is our vehicle for being in touch with our source and our strength; for being in touch with the power of Life Itself.

--- Swami Chetanananda

Closed-eye meditation is our opportunity to work inside to be established in a state of openness and flow, make the connections with and between the chakras, solidify our wish to grow, and explore the techniques of the practice. It is also the vehicle for deeply absorbing the experience of transmission, release, and expansion that we contact in class with the teacher. We practice closed-eye meditation together at the Institute. We can also practice at home or on our own wherever we may be. What is important is that we establish a time and a quiet place to do our practice, and that we do it every day.

* See General Information section for class times

Description of Closed-Eye Meditation

Whenever we sit for meditation, at home or at the Institute, eyes open or closed, our effort is the same. First we use our breath to relax our bodies and stabilize our minds. Then, we draw our attention to the subtle pulsation at the base of the spine and attune our breath to that pulsation. During our meditation, we take our attention through each chakra from the base of the spine to the top of the head, discerning the qualities of each chakra and finding the flow between them. As we become aware of that flow, we begin to experience the awakening of our creative energy. We may feel a sense of warmth and expansion as this energy rises up to the top of the head. We use the breath to stay open and relaxed as this energy rises, allowing our inner chemistry to change deeply.

When we close our eyes, we are turning our attention inside and reversing the ordinary flow of our attention and energy. Instead of our usual involvement in external activities, we tune into the power that underlies those activities. We look within to experience the vitality of our individual awareness and to realize the infinite nature of our own individualized consciousness.

As in eyes-open class, use the breathing exercise to relax, to center your awareness, and to deepen your connection to the flow of energy.

Close your meditation period by taking a few minutes to absorb this release of finer energy into your system, drawing your breath into the heart chakra and then down into the abdominal chakra, feeling a sense of gratitude and centeredness. At the Institute, the end of closed-eye meditation class is signaled by seven strikes of the gong.

Reflections

Expect miracles every time you sit. You will have every kind of experience in your inner practice, from completely constricted to totally open and flowing. Remain centered and focused through every kind of experience, allowing it to become part of the flow of energy. You will develop the ability to absorb everything deeply within yourself, turning every experience into fuel for your growth.

The Self we contact in meditation, that quiet, pulsating center of our existence, is nothing other than the universal Self. The most intimate part of us is universal and infinite -- and as close as our breath.

Chanting balances and brings into harmony the rhythms of the body and the mind. By directing our attention to the various chakras during chanting, we are harmonizing our body and our mind with the chakras and the chakras with each other, so that the whole mechanism is open and flowing. This allows a simple, pure awareness of that vital consciousness that is our core to emerge.

--- Swami Chetanananda

OTHER TECHNIQUES

Chanting: A Preparation for Meditation
A Natural Pranayama
The Focus is on Vibration -- Pure Sound
Harmony
Negative Psychic Tension Release Exercise

Chanting: A Preparation for Meditation

Chanting could be described as vocalized sound in a simple repetitive melodic pattern -- but it is much more than that. It is an important part of our spiritual practice. At the Institute, each time we sit together, we begin with chanting as a preparation for meditation.

Chanting prepares us in many ways: it is something lighthearted and enjoyable that we can do together; it serves as a bridge from our worldly activities to an inner focus; it draws our attention to the breath; and it brings us an awareness of the vibration of sound inside us. But most importantly, by tuning into the vibration and rhythm of chanting, we bring a simple steady rhythm to the breath, stability to the mind,

harmony to the mind and body, and increased awareness and flow to the chakras.

A Natural Pranayama

The science of pranayama (the study of breath) explores this subtle connection between the mind and the breath -- as the breath relaxes, slows down, and deepens, the mind also unwinds, slows down, and relaxes. As we practice chanting, our own experience will verify that a quiet, relaxed mind is an essential first step to meditation.

One powerful benefit of chanting is the simple rhythm it brings to our breath. Singing naturally and necessarily brings our breathing into a smooth, full, and regular pattern. The rhythmic repetition of a chant is a natural pranayama, deepening and regulating the breath. Our body, mind, and emotions become stabilised in this rhythmic pulse, and an simple state of serenity arises, similar to the feeling that we have when we listen to the endless succession of waves at the seashore. Our awareness is naturally drawn deeper inside.

The Focus is on Vibration -- Pure Sound

In the traditions of Kashmir Shaivism, chants sung in Sanskrit and offered praise and devotion to Shiva and

Shakti (as symbols of the Ultimate Reality), and to other gods and goddesses. We sing many of the same chants at the Institute; others have been composed by Institute members in both English and Sanskrit.

Shaivism states that human beings are fundamentally made up of vibrations -- sound. The ancient Indian sages studied sound carefully and discovered certain foundational vibrations which they expressed as the Sanskrit alphabet -- each letter representing a specific vibration. This is why the Sanskrit language is particularly well-suited to chanting.

In their most elemental state, these vibrations interact and form the centers of resonance we call chakras. Each chakra has its own unique resonance, or bija (seed sound). They reflect the richness of vibration within each of us, from the base of the spine to the top of the head.

Harmony

Through chanting we begin to quiet our mind and bring the various rhythms of our body and mind into harmony. This attunement of body and mind is at the heart of the Indian music tradition. Over time, when we chant we can direct our attention into each chakra and harmonize one with the other. As our total mechanism

becomes open, a simple, pure awareness of the core of our being begins to emerge.

In this way, chanting is an excellent support for our practice of meditation, and parallels the meditative experience. When we focus on the chant's rhythm and resonance, we allow the creative energy to flow through the chakras. This provides us with a tangible experience of the unity of inner and outer worlds. That is why, when we chant from the heart, we feel a connection to the subtle, infinite vibration of Life Itself, and we are filled with joy, devotion, and knowing.

CHANTING: An Exercise

Within each chakra there exists a seed sound called a <bija>. By chanting the bijas and observing their resonance in the chakras, we begin to recognize our fundamental nature as vibration.

In the following exercise, we explore two bijas by sounding them and focusing on the vibration they set up in us.

1. Take a series of five or six deep, full breaths. Relax your body, relax your abdomen, and let the breath flow in deeply and smoothly.
2. When you have established an easy deep breathing pattern and your mind begins to quiet, exhale and chant the syllable "lam" (pronounced "lahm") while focusing your attention on the chakra at the base of the spine. Place emphasis on the initial "l" sound as you chant this bija.
3. Now exhale again and repeat the sound. Feel it vibrate in the base of your spine. Visualize the vibration, listen to it, taste it -- use all of your senses to connect to the sound.
4. The bija for the heart chakra is "yam." Try repeating "yam" (pronounced "yahm") while you focus on the heart. You may notice that it has a lighter and more refined quality than the first bija. Again, use all your senses to connect to the experience.
5. Go through the repetition several more times, focusing on the inner resonance this sets up in your entire body. Focus on the center of the sound.

This is the essence of chanting.

Negative Psychic Tension Release Exercise

Any spiritual practice, especially this one, is a powerful experience which lights the inner fire. Once this inner fire is ignited, we may feel a burning sensation, classically called *tapasya*. Because of this, it is important every day, for fifteen or twenty minutes, to completely and deeply relax.

--- Swami Chetanananda

Letting go of stress and tensions is a critical part of preparing for meditation. To help us drop the tensions that often accumulate during the day and in the course of practice, we have a simple exercise for relaxing deeply every day called the Negative Psychic Tension Release Exercise.

Once you have released tensions and relaxed your body, it will be easier for you to absorb the energy of the meditation class. By flushing out the stress and tension -- the dust on the road -- at least once every day, you will be able to deal with all the difficulties you have to face in your life with openness and understanding.

Description of Tension Release Exercise

Start in a comfortable seated position, preferably in a straight-backed chair, with your feet flat on the floor. Close your eyes, relax, and turn your attention inside. As you sit, breathe easily and deeply, relaxing fully.

1. Keep your breath deep and simple. Let your arms hang at your sides about 10 inches away from your body, exerting just enough effort to keep them there.

2. Now focus your attention in your heart chakra and ask, consciously ask, to be released of all tensions. You might visualize a thick sticky substance coming up from your midsection and heart to your shoulders, traveling under and down your arms, and out your hands. As you do this, continue to ask to release all negative psychic tension. You may feel a sensation of tingling or release as this thickness falls away.

3. You can also focus on particular areas of tension throughout your body. Picture the tension flowing down your arms and out your fingertips. Let this process of gathering and releasing continue for 10-20 minutes or until you feel a new level of clarity and freshness inside.

The Negative Psychic Tension Release Exercise is an excellent preparation for meditation as well as for sleep. It is a simple but profound exercise to keep the process of unfoldment moving freely. As you complete the exercise, take a few minutes to inwardly express your gratitude for the release.

PART THREE: LIVING OUR PRACTICE

LIVING OUR PRACTICE

- The Role of the Teacher
- The Student-Teacher Relationship
- The Student's Effort
 - Devotion
 - Hard Work
 - Honesty
 - Making the Commitment

DEMONSTRATING OUR PRACTICE: SEVA

- Seva as Transformation
- Seva as Participation
- This Understanding Doesn't Change the World --
 - It Changes Us
- Tension, Resistance, and Surrender
- Total Well-Being

SUPPORTING OUR PRACTICE

- Practicing at Home
- Hatha Yoga

SUMMARY

- Life is a Unity

PART 3: LIVING THE PRACTICE

Meditation is not just to sit down and be quiet. Yes, that's a necessary part of it. But it's also necessary to carry the awareness you establish in yourself during meditation into the whole of your day -- into all of the relationships that you establish -- in order to broaden and deepen your awareness of this reciprocal relationship between the individual and Life Itself, between your own spirit and God.

-- Swami Chetanananda

LIVING THE PRACTICE

The Role of the Teacher
The Student-Teacher Relationship
The Student's Effort
 Devotion
 Hard Work
 Honesty
 Making the Commitment

Living The Practice

Our work -- like the nature of Consciousness Itself -- is a unity. All of our actions and our experiences, everything that happens to us and everything we do, are strands in the fabric of our lives. In the highest sense, the teaching, teacher, and student are inseparable. Our personal experience of this unity is awakened, nourished, and stabilized in the context of our practice.

The role of the student is to learn about, experience, serve, and eventually reside in this state

of complete unity. This development takes place in the arena of the student-teacher relationship.

The Role Of The Teacher

In many meditation traditions, the student is required to go through several preliminary stages before ever receiving direct instruction from the teacher. The discussion of creative energy emerges only after a long period of time.

In this tradition, however, the experience of creative energy is available immediately. From the very beginning, Swamiji supports our understanding of this experience through discussion and example. He is there to arouse the creative energy within us, by the force of his own creative energy. The teacher unlocks our tensions, releases the stresses and strains, and cuts through the obstructions in us to awaken our own creative force. This is the heart of shaktipat, and it is wonderful; we contact the essence of Life Itself within us. We recognize that there is something real we can do, a way we can work and live, that will be a vehicle for our transformation.

Second, the teacher is a support to his students in this transformation. As we move from our ordinary, conditioned state to the totally unconditioned state

that is liberation, we are transformed. The teacher is the point of stability in this total shift.

In other words, our ordinary state is conditioned by boundaries and limits. And the "natural" progression of life tends to increase the limits and solidify the boundaries. We are all conditioned to think of ourselves in certain ways. Our biology conditions us, our family conditions us, and our culture conditions us as we move to become a psychological, emotional, and economic entity in the world. In general, this conditioning is in conflict with our own innate nature, and we feel a great deal of self-rejection, inadequacy, fear, and tension. A whole complex of issues arise.

When we take up a spiritual practice and move towards self-transformation, this process is reversed. We start to dissolve our boundaries, and our notion of objectives changes completely. Ordinarily, objectives are concrete and seen in terms of something outside us. But in an unconditioned person, or a person seeking transformation, objectives are subtle. They are completely internalized. They are subtle in the sense that they cannot be defined in advance of their manifestation. They are internalized because they have no outside objective, no objective form. To say that more clearly, we don't make ourselves into something -- we discover the depth and breadth of what we are, of our

creative potential. We don't try to take this potential and turn it into this thing or that -- we allow that potential to inform us of its own nature.

This transformation is often a dramatic experience, filled with both turmoil and exhilaration. The teacher is there to support us throughout, first by demonstrating daily in his own being how this extraordinary state of unconditionedness can manifest and function in the world in harmony -- how it can be woven into the world itself. The teacher is also there to lend strength and steadiness to the student in the times when there is some agitation. Part of the role of the physical teacher is to stabilize: to stabilize our creative energy, our mind and emotions, and in some cases even our physical life. In this way, the teacher becomes the ground in which we are rooted; the field in which we can grow, make mistakes, be inspired and informed, and recognize our unity in Life Itself. Swamiji has said it this way:

The teacher transmits to us, through shaktipat, the creative energy of his own being, to arouse within us a deeper inner spirit and cause it to begin to expand from within. Slowly, any real teacher draws us into a state of complete equality and total rapport with the supreme power of Life Itself within us.

The Student-Teacher Relationship

The whole point of the student-teacher relationship is contact: union, a meeting of hearts and minds. Sometimes that contact happens in a direct and powerful way. Other times, it takes longer and requires some cultivation. In either event, this contact is the real beginning of the awakening of the creative energy, whether it happens fast or slow. The fire in the teacher ignites the fire in us.

Our contact with a true spiritual teacher is a special and rare event. The teacher's role is to support and promote the highest best interest of the student. It is our responsibility to approach that relationship with great respect and openness, to receive the teaching and make every effort to incorporate it into our daily lives. In this way we learn to be the best person we can be.

The instruction is given as a gift -- it is there to be used. When we take our practice and use it, we open our hearts and minds ever more deeply. We begin to live from the center of our being. This is our responsibility as students. And who benefits in this event? The student benefits: we are transformed.

By embracing the teaching wholeheartedly and trying to live from a place of love and openness, our

connection with the teacher is promoted. The flow of energy between teacher and student is strengthened. We learn to function from the deepest part of ourselves, calling upon our inner resources to meet the challenges of our day to day life. And this effort uplifts us, completely transforming our life. We are the direct beneficiary.

Out of this contact with the teacher, which we can also call love, an unfolding takes place. Layers of tension are peeled away and a creative freedom blossoms. It is a special, beautiful event.

Then it is up to us to develop this flow and to come back for more nourishment, clarification, and reinforcement of the fundamental concepts. In the broadest sense, this is the student-teacher relationship. The teacher's primary role is to release tensions in us and support the flow of our creative energy. Our effort as students is to maintain and deepen that experience.

We cultivate this experience, internalize it, and allow it to become part of our permanent state -- an energy we can share with whomever we meet in whatever we do. Then all our contacts are permeated with love, joy, and vitality.

Kabir says this: When the Guest is being searched for, it is the intensity of the longing for the Guest that does all the work.

Look at me, and you will see a slave to that intensity.

--- Kabir
15th c. North Indian
ecstatic poet

A commitment to growing spiritually will constantly challenge the boundaries of our understanding. It is our devotion and trust in the teacher as the expression of the highest Consciousness that gives us the courage and energy to make that commitment. The most important act of a student is to make a deep sincere commitment to spiritual growth.

--- Swami Chetanananda

THE STUDENT'S EFFORT

Devotion
Hard Work
Honesty
Making the Commitment

The Student's Effort

We have said that having a teacher is the fundamental support, nourishment, and inspiration for the student's process of discovery. But whether or not we will actually discover the profound power and uplifting beauty that exists within us is not up to the teacher. It's up to us. It rests upon our devotion, our willingness to work, and our capacity to be honest

with ourselves. With these qualities, we come to the possibility of becoming a serious student.

Devotion

The first and most important element of growth is devotion. You can have the greatest teacher in the world, but this is useless if it is not your deep intention to grow -- if you are not completely devoted to growing. It is our devotion to the quest for truth and our persistence in that quest that enables us to connect to, sustain, and support the unfolding of the energy within us.

Hard Work

Second, you have to be willing to work hard, to practice constantly. You have to remember what you are about all the time. You work to master all of the tools you are given -- the experiences, the feeling, the energy, the understanding, the techniques, everything. It takes time even to understand the powerful significance of the breathing exercise, simple as it may seem. You have to be willing to work. And the degree to which you manifest this willingness is an expression of how devoted you are.

Only a serious effort can free us from the deep tensions within ourselves and the tensions around us.

It is work, and it is wonderful. It frees us from all resistance to the flow of Life within us. By this effort, we become stabilized inside, and at ease. We learn to be continuously in contact with the power of Life which is both elegant and gracious, continuously giving and receiving, continuously renewing itself.

Honesty

Most people only think they want consciousness.

--- Swami Chetanananda

Next, it's important for a student to cultivate honesty. Within the context of our devotion, we must have the ability to be honest, most importantly with ourselves. We should develop the fundamental capacity to look at the disappointments and struggles that arise within us from a different perspective. We have to look clearly at how we feel, not how we'd like to feel, or how we think we ought to feel, or how we think the teacher wants us to feel. Then we have to take another step: to examine those feelings in the light of our ideal and come to some deeper understanding about those feelings.

If we can't be honest with ourselves, we will never really develop the refined sensitivity it takes to be aware of the linkage points in the energy, those subtle

points where the energy goes from complex to simple to more simple and finally to one, to unity.

Making the Commitment

Swamiji often says: "You are nothing but an individuated manifestation of divine Consciousness." Think about that. If we could really know that, we certainly would not be so caught up in our own needs. We would have no place we would need to get to in such a hurry, and no need to become something we are not.

Something deep within us does know that we are that divine Consciousness and that is why we can trust or have faith. From that trust comes devotion, a devotion to the inner Self.

When we come in contact with a true teacher, we recognize that dynamic vitality in him and then begin to sense it in ourselves as well. The teacher is an integral part of recognizing the divine Consciousness in ourselves.

As this relationship unfolds, we make a commitment to our own inner work and we realize that the teacher is the vehicle for realizing our highest potential. The commitment we make mobilizes our own inner resources towards this objective. When we make a real commitment in ourselves, we experience a distinct shift in our energy, focusing our awareness on being the best person

we possibly can be. The very act of making a commitment summons an inner strength and determination we may not have been aware of before.

It is through commitment that we can stabilize our minds and emotions, and experience a deep flow of creative energy. This stability, in turn, allows us to further deepen our devotion and our commitment. We begin to understand the depth of what is taking place between us and the teacher, and we see our own place in the whole fabric of Life as one which is, at the same time, both significant and insignificant. We understand about all relationships because of this relationship with the teacher.

Understanding that, we rise to the level where love no longer has anything to do with individuals. At a certain stage, we understand that love wears many faces in our life. And the important thing is not the faces that it wears, but its enduring Presence. Then the teaching imparted to us by the teacher is fully realized. We recognize that there is no fundamental separation between us and the teacher or between teacher and teaching -- it is all Consciousness, it is all One.

Service is not an altruistic endeavor. It is the attitude that we take toward every activity and field of interaction within our life. This attitude of service will support for us the extension of our creative energy in the process of refinement that is the essence of spiritual work.

-- Swami Chetanananda

All offerings are offerings of your own Self. The receiver of them all is also you -- and the link between the two is you, too.

--- Swami Chetanananda

DEMONSTRATING OUR PRACTICE: SEVA

Seva as Transformation

Seva as Participation

This Understanding Doesn't Change the World -- It Changes Us

Tension, Resistance, and Surrender

Total Well-Being:

Demonstrating Our Practice: Seva

If our spiritual practice is to have any real and tangible effect on our life, it must be demonstrated in our everyday environment -- in our relationships, in our jobs, in our daily interactions, in our community. It is here that the concept of seva (service) arises:

service is the natural demonstration of our understanding of unity. This service is very different from doing someone a favor or a kindness.

Seva is the extension of our creative energy into the total field of our experience. In true service we are, again, simply releasing tension and allowing the creative energy to flow -- only the context has changed.

We serve in order to release tension in our environment, in our relationships, and in ourselves.

Another interpretation of the Sanskrit word "seva" is "to mix" -- to mix our contemplation with our everyday activity. This means that wherever we go and whatever we do, it is all fundamentally an act of meditation, an extension of our contemplative awareness through all of the forms and fields of creative experience. This is a useful distinction, because we tend to get emotional about "service." We might think, "Oh, I was serving him, how come he's not serving me?" or "I'm doing this, how come it isn't being reciprocated?" There's just no keeping score. Frankly, it is useless to keep accounts. In seva we mix our awareness with our activity. All the facets of our lives are integrated by our attitude of service.

Seva as Transformation

A tree by its very nature takes in those elements from the atmosphere that are poison to us, uses that carbon dioxide for nourishment and growth and, through a miracle of Life, transforms that poison into life-giving oxygen. A tree doesn't think about this activity; it is the nature of a tree to give in this way and, in the giving, it grows.

In a similar way, it is our own highest nature to

take in tensions from the environment in which we live and work and, through the miracle of our spiritual practice, transform those tensions into creative energy which nourishes and uplifts the whole environment.

This service or giving is part sacrifice and part surrender. Unlike trees, we are conditioned to operate from a state of anxiety: "What's going to happen to me?" In other words, because we may not be aware of the real nature of service -- the natural process of giving and receiving that trees exemplify -- giving of ourselves may be painful. Absorbing this pain for our growth, for our willingness to change, is called sacrifice.

In order to absorb (or transcend) pain and resistance, we must relax deeply. Relaxing deeply allows the melting of our tensions and allows the shift in our state to complete itself. This deep conscious relaxation in the face of tension is called surrender.

We serve through the sacrifice and surrender of our tensions. We serve by encompassing whatever is in front of us and releasing the creative energy in that moment and that particular situation. With this understanding and through this activity, we realize our highest potential and serve all of Life.

Or, as Swamiji has said: "By emptying we become full, by giving we become whole, by filling others we are fulfilled."

Seva as Participation

Cultivating an attitude of service leads us to recognize the infinite nature of our own individual consciousness. What appears from a physical and material level to be a diverse process of exchange between human beings is really the pulsation of the creative energy. We think we are giving and taking, but, in fact, it is just the creative energy pulsating. Service reveals itself for what it is: simply participating in Life Itself. By serving we participate in this pulsation and each time we do, we create a space inside us for the energy of Life to demonstrate its endless capacity for renewal. Similarly, when we act, when we serve, it's not exactly that we do something for someone; we are participating in our own life, in the unfoldment of Life Itself. This understanding continuously pushes us not to get stuck in the small picture, but to take the broad perspective.

This Understanding Doesn't Change the World -- It Changes Us

There is no avoiding or denying our involvement in the world. It is a fact: we get involved. What we look for is the balance point, the center of the dynamic interaction between inner and outer. Balance makes

genuine service possible. This understanding does not make the world different than it is. The world we live in can be difficult, even brutal. It does, however, make us less brutal; it makes us more sensitive and more able to deal with the harshness around us. And as we can extend this understanding to other people, we gradually expand the range of our participation. If you can do it at the bank with the teller in a simple interaction, then maybe you can do it at the post office, too. Certainly if you maintain your balanced attitude while driving through the streets of Boston, that is a real service.

Tension, Resistance, and Surrender: a different morality

Growing spiritually is a constant challenge. Just maintaining an inner focus as we move through our day is challenging work. On the one hand, our life is a dynamic, fluid, ever-changing event, full of energy and potential. But the pulsation of our life also naturally gives rise to the experience of resistance. "For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction:" anytime you push, a resistance automatically comes up.

The real day-to-day work of our lives is to surrender our resistance. We can't exactly overcome it, but we can continuously surrender it by releasing tensions and allowing our own highest creative potential

to unfold and flow. This flow brings a richness within and around us that has the potential to fill us and also to fill the lives of those people whose lives we touch.

This attitude toward tension provides a unique view of the place of morality. We are not "good" just for the sake of being "good"; altruism is not the basis for our moral behavior. We behave in the world and in our relationships with others so as not to create unnecessary tensions. We are not concerned about being a good person or a bad person. We are concerned about releasing tension and allowing creative energy to flow - in all situations.

Total Well-Being: a state of dynamic balance

On a practical level, we learn that because life is a unity, what occurs in one area or level of our lives has an effect that extends through every other area. This means our physical and mental health and our spiritual awareness are reciprocally related. When one arena of our life is out of balance, others usually follow suit. For example, when we feel physically unwell, it is hard to maintain a positive mental attitude or to feel we have the energy to dedicate to our spiritual practice. Similarly, when we achieve balance in one area, this naturally extends to others. Recent articles in medical journals and publications

have stressed the ways a positive emotional state can help cure physical illness, for example.

As part of our practice, we are seeking health, but what we seek is not health in the ordinary sense -- that is, health as the absence of disease. The health we seek is a state of balance in which we experience total well-being. It is the perfect balance point among our physical, mental-emotional, and spiritual lives.

On a practical, physical level, diet and exercise are two important areas for maintaining health. What you eat has a profound effect on how you feel and on your total well-being. It takes some exploration to find the diet right for you, but it is well worth it. There are many good books and articles that can help you get started listed in the Bibliography at the end of this manual. Exercise has both immediate and long term impact on your well-being; the benefits of hatha yoga in this regard have already been discussed.

By paying attention to these various arenas of our lives and by continually releasing tensions on every level, the flow of our lives will naturally take us to that dynamic balance point that is total well-being.

This is not a static point; we don't reach a state of balance and then just coast along. The balance point is dynamic and always shifting. We work to maintain our state of balance.

Tensions of every variety constantly pull us off that balance point; being involved in tensions limits our ability to experience total well-being. Therefore, our job remains, as always, to release tensions and allow the creative energy to flow freely and without obstruction. It is best to lead a life based on simplicity, harmony, and discipline. With this attitude, we can be simple enough to read the signals that are being given to guide us. We can also avoid creating new tensions, and we have the discipline to do what needs to be done. It is the flow of our creative energy that naturally guides us to the state of balance.

So work within yourself. It is essential to do this work in the midst of your everyday life, to begin to observe this energy in motion from within and around you. It is your work on yourself, in each of the different circumstances of your experience, that slowly brings this understanding home to you. As you do this work, it will become more clear; it will become your own understanding and your own experience.

SUPPORTING OUR PRACTICE

Practicing at Home Hatha Yoga

Practicing at Home

Class at the Institute provides a structured opportunity and an environment for us to apply, observe, and explore the techniques of the practice in a group setting. But we also practice on our own. All it takes is a quiet place, twenty to forty minutes of uninterrupted time, and a commitment to do it. Remember, the only way to understand our practice is to experience it.

Where?: Practicing at home should be done in a clean and uncluttered space, a space that reflects your respect for the practice and your effort. Many people set aside a specific place for meditation only, making it special with a photograph of the teacher, a low table or shelf, fresh flowers, incense, and beautiful objects.

When?: It is good to begin every day with a period of meditation, with a second period when the day is finished. Whatever time you choose to sit, the most important thing is to develop a pattern, making the effort to sit every day at the same time and in the same place. In this way, you develop an appetite for it, and

the pattern itself will support you in your desire to practice regularly.

How Long?: Everyone has his or her own cycle of meditation. As you practice, you will discover your own cycle. Chances are it will range between twenty and forty minutes. On some occasions, it will be longer. Begin by sitting between thirty and forty minutes, and give your cycle a chance to reveal itself to you.

How Often?: You should sit at least once every day. At the same time, you may find that as your practice deepens, your desire to sit increases. You may become fascinated by the process of Self-knowledge and introspection and, as a result, build in time to sit more often. Is possible to sit too much?. The answer is that sitting should never keep you from your daily functions and responsibilities.

What if I Travel?: If you find yourself frequently on the road, sitting daily becomes particularly important since you are not only away from your home and the Institute, but also away from your daily routine. So if you travel, try to make the time to consciously support your practice. Many students who travel put together a simple meditation travel kit, that may include a photograph, incense, candle, matches, and maybe even a cassette player for listening to chanting or talks by Swamiji.

The perfection of hatha yoga is an expression of the highest potential available to the body. It is an essential initial stage in the experience of the inner Self attained in meditation.

--- Swami Chetanananda

HATHA YOGA IN A MEDITATION PRACTICE

Balance, Harmony and Relaxation
Asana and Pranayama
Effort and Surrender
Pranayama
Meditation and Hatha Yoga

Balance, Harmony, and Relaxation

Hatha yoga is an ancient system of movement that brings breath, mind, body, and spirit into harmony. If you find that when you sit for meditation, your mind rambles, your neck hurts, your whole body aches, you feel physically and mentally rigid -- consider practicing hatha yoga. Hatha requires no special equipment or clothes. Anyone can practice.

In its simplest form, hatha yoga is a remarkably effective system of exercise that focuses on breath and movement. It can reduce stress. It can lower blood pressure and break down tension in the body. It is a practice specifically designed to maximize the vitality of the body -- to rid the body of stiffness, tension, bad postural habits, toxins, and disease-inducing imbalances. In short, through a conscious practice of

<asana> (postures and poses) and <pranayama> (breath regulation), we learn another way to release tensions and allow our creative energy to flow.

Asana and Pranayama

Yoga is a Sanskrit word that means to unite, to join; and "hatha" is derived from the Sanskrit words for sun (ha) and moon (tha). Together, the words refer to a practice that directs us to the experience of harmony between inner and outer, between the individual and the universal. It brings us to the experience of the infinite nature of our own individual consciousness.

Asana is a Sanskrit word that means seat or sitting position. The earliest hatha yoga texts reveal that the first asanas were meditation poses. Yogis practiced sitting or lying in asanas that permitted them to concentrate on their meditation, not on their bodies.

Asanas move every part of the body, stretching and toning the muscles and joints, the spine, and the entire skeletal system. They work not only on the muscles and the body's frame but also on the internal organs, glands, and nerves, keeping all systems in radiant health.

Each asana has its particular effects, physical and mental/emotional. Some postures are calming, some are stimulating. Some teach humility, others instill

courage. Some can warm us while others cool us. Regular practice builds both strength and flexibility. Even though some poses are challenging, our effort is to attain a steady and comfortable posture.

Effort and Surrender

This requires both relaxation and concentration. We make an effort and we let go. We practice and at the same time we relinquish any notion we have of attainment. As we hold an asana, we strive to feel steady and comfortable. We focus on our breath, we pay attention and make adjustments to the pose to feel an evenness of sensation or working throughout our body. Adjustments are made "from the inside out;" the asanas then allow our inner energy to move upward. As the energy rises, the crystallized patterns of tension begin to release and we experience a very real change. And because body and mind are intimately and integrally related, we experience change not only in our bodies but also in our minds and emotions.

Pranayama (Breath)

We promote this change through awareness of the breath. In hatha, we use a form of breathing called the full yogic breath. It involves expanding the upper and middle chest as well as the abdominal area with breath,

and is generally deeper and fuller than our ordinary breath. Focus on breath also brings an awareness of the three parts of the breath: inhalation, retention, and exhalation.

The importance of breath is explained in a quote from the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, one of the classical texts: "When the breath wanders, the mind is unsteady, but when the breath is still, so is the mind still." Deep breathing is soothing. It settles the nerves and calms the mind. It is the vehicle that brings about relaxation and helps maintain it. Through our focused effort, deep breathing, and conscious relaxation, tensions are released, and we change.

By remaining in a deeply relaxed state, we are able to absorb the experience. We begin to recognize the relationship between the inner and the outer.

This recognition occurs naturally. We begin to notice inner sensations and vibrations. We discover simple adjustments in our poses that increase the vibration. We learn to observe all sensation whether it is physical, mental, or emotional. We develop awareness. We are in a state of receptivity.

From this state, we discover that we are not merely the sensations of our bodies. We recognize our own infinite potentiality.

Meditation and Hatha Yoga

Meditation is an integral part of the Institute's hatha program. We teach a classical style which, although uniquely tailored for Americans, remains true to the goal of hatha -- to attain a state of meditation.

We practice hatha to free body and mind from the crystallized patterns that restrict our progress. We reach the goal of hatha yoga when we feel steady and comfortable in a pose, breathing fully, and feeling the upward movement of our energy. We concentrate and reach a state of meditation.

The following simple stretches will help you sit more comfortably. Practice them for just a few minutes every day and you will find a big difference.



HATHA YOGA FOR MEDITATION

We have a hatha yoga practice that we take up to stretch our muscles and get our breathing going in a different way so there is a relaxation in our physical system that allows our minds to relax and brings us easier access to this inner spirit.

Swami Chetanananda

The following postures will stretch and strengthen muscles, helping you to relax and sit comfortably while meditating.



Bound Angle Pose

This pose loosens hips and thighs allowing your knees to open out more comfortably toward the floor when you sit.

Sit up straight, bend both knees, and bring the soles of your feet together. Let your knees turn out. Take hold around feet or ankles and draw your back up straight. Breathe evenly. Try to relax deeply and feel a release in the hips and thighs. Hold this position as long as comfortable.

Variations: If your back bothers you, sit against a wall. Adding a forward bend to this pose will increase the stretch.

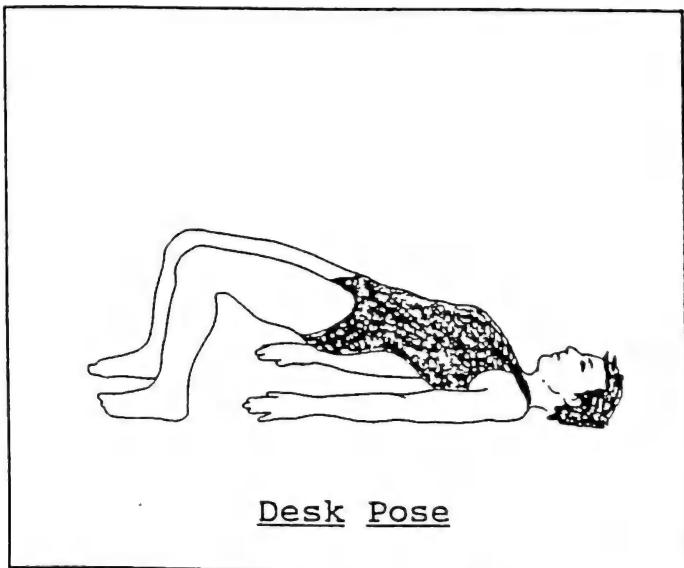


Leg Cradle

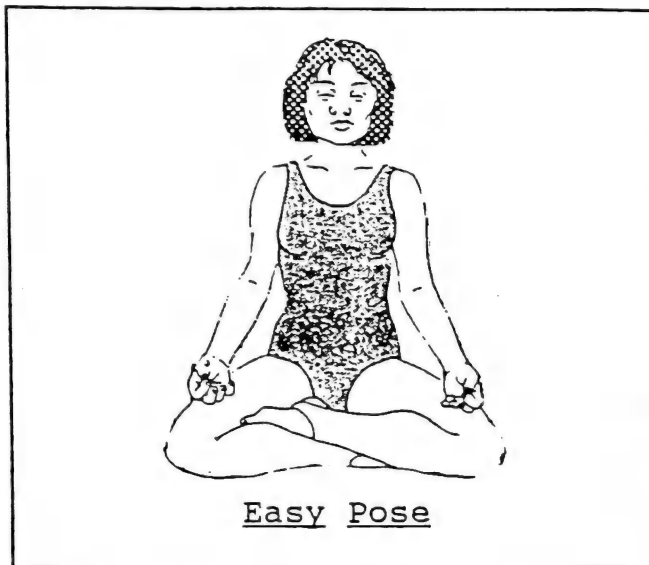
This movement adds an additional stretch to the hip muscles, increasing the range of motion.

Sit straight and extend one leg on the floor in front of you. Bend the knee of your other leg, turn your foot in and grab hold around the outside of your ankle and shin. Making a slow circular motion, bring your bent leg up and toward you, then down and back around. Repeat 4 times, then switch legs.

Variation: This movement may be done lying on your back.



The posture will build strength and flexibility in your back. Lie on your back, bend your knees, place both feet flat on the floor. Bring arms along side your body; turn the palms down. Lift your hips, lower, middle, then upper back off the floor coming into a slanted position. Hold this position for 3 breaths, or as long as comfortable, then roll your back down to the floor. While holding this pose, keep your knees and feet parallel, and remember to breathe easily.



This simple crossed leg position is easy to assume. However, if your hips and legs are tight and sitting is uncomfortable, you can help ease the discomfort by sitting on several zafus.

As you get used to sitting in a meditation posture, you will find that your hips and legs begin to relax down and sitting in a meditation posture will become second nature.

Life is a Unity

Life Itself is already in you, it is always there. Its grandeur, its splendor, its vitality, its enormous creative power will reveal itself if you will simply relax and allow the boundaries that you have established for yourself to begin to dissolve.

--- Swami Chetanananda

Seeing life as a unity removes our fear, dissolves our attachments, and frees us from our wants and needs. Then, in a very simple way, Life can manifest from within us in its fullness without being limited by the tensions that ordinarily populate our mind and emotions. We are free to participate fully in life, as we are and as it is. This is an extraordinary discovery, a wonderful adventure. It is a very deep education that is continuously nourishing and uplifting us.

Part Four

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT PRACTICING AT THE NITYANANDA INSTITUTE

The Nityananda Institute, founded and directed by Swami Chetanananda (Swamiji), is an organization dedicated to supporting individuals in their pursuit of Self-realization through the study and practice of kundalini yoga and Kashmir Shaivism.

Participation at the Institute is possible on many levels. Classes in meditation, kundalini yoga, and hatha yoga are offered daily as well as periodic seminars, retreats, and summer programs. In addition, the Institute offers a residence program for people interested in pursuing their practice in an atmosphere designed to support inner growth.

In this section, you'll find detailed information about the kinds of classes offered, schedules, special programs, fees, membership, and other helpful information.

If you have further questions after reading this section, please call the Institute offices (617/497-6263) or contact your introductory instructor. A good time to catch him or her is after the evening program. If you have trouble contacting your instructor, ask the greeter at the door to help you or to refer you to another instructor.

A SPECIAL NOTE TO PARTICIPANTS AT REGIONAL CENTERS:

Some of the information in this section is specific to the programs and structure at the main center of the Institute in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Please check with your center director for details of programs and schedules in your city.

WEEKLY CLASS SCHEDULE

	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
AM:							
6:30			Morning Meditation - - - - -				
9:30	Public Program						
<hr/>							
PM:							
5:30			Intro. Class				Intro. Class
7:00		Devotional Chanting Program	Eyes- Open Class	Guided Medt'n	Eyes- Open Class	Eyes- Open Class	Eyes- Open Class
<hr/>							
(details of these classes are given below)							

GENERAL NOTES

Location: All of the programs listed above are held at 6 Linnaean Street, Cambridge.

Public programs: The Sunday morning program and the Monday evening devotional chanting are open to the public, free of charge, and require no introduction. You are welcome to come as often as you like to these programs; they are intended to give non-members of the Institute extended opportunities to participate in and explore what the Institute can offer.

Sunday Morning Program: Every Sunday at 9:30 a.m., this informal program gives you a first-hand experience of the elements of our practice. There are two formats. One is an interactive discussion with Swamiji; the other, when Swamiji is not available, is a three part program of chanting, guided meditation, and instruction. The program lasts for about 90 minutes and you are welcome to join us for brunch and informal discussion afterwards.

Monday Night Devotional Chanting: Every Monday evening at 7:00 p.m., the Institute hosts an evening of devotional chanting dedicated to Bhagavan Nityananda. We chant for one hour and sit in meditation for fifteen minutes. No introduction is necessary; visitors are welcome.

If you would like to join with Institute members in any of the other group meditation sessions, we require that you first attend an Introductory Class.

Introductory Class: The introductory class is given by appointment on either Tuesday or Saturday evening at 5:30. Please call the Institute offices (617/497-6263) to make an appointment. This introduction is intended to prepare you for sitting with us in an eyes-open class with a teacher, which follows at 7:00 p.m. The introductory class gives an overview of the philosophy underlying our practice and instruction in some basic techniques that support it. It is taught by a senior student of the Institute.

There is a second, follow-up class offered every Thursday evening at 8:30. This hour-long session is designed to review the material of the Introductory Class, introduce some further material on our philosophy and practice, and give you a forum for your questions on the introductory material. You can attend this open-forum session as often as you like.

The fee for the introductory class includes the instruction itself, the supplementary second hour of instruction and questions, this Manual, and your tuition for one month (see below).

Tuition: The Sunday morning program and Monday evening devotional chanting are free of charge. For those who wish to participate in the daily meditation sessions, tuition is \$25 per month. We suggest that you pay quarterly (\$75) or annually (\$300). Payments can be dropped off in the payment box in the kitchen of 6 Linnaean Street or mailed to the Institute offices at P.O. Box 1973, Cambridge, MA 02238.

Arrival: All classes begin promptly and, since there is no admittance once they begin, please plan to arrive a few minutes early. This also gives you time to get settled before class begins.

When you arrive, you will leave your shoes and coat in the entry hall, choose a zafu (cushion) from the shelves and pick up a chanting sheet as you enter the meditation hall.

If you have any questions or special needs, an Institute member will be in the foyer to assist you before and after class.

Seating: In the meditation hall, you'll notice that people are sitting in rows. These rows are kept as straight as possible to facilitate sight lines and maximize the seating capacity in the room. Since maintaining eye contact with the teacher is important during eyes-open class, as a courtesy to others please sit to the side or at the back of the room if you are very tall or if you sit on several cushions.

If you are not accustomed to sitting cross-legged, it may help you to elevate your hips by using a fuller zafu or even two zafus. By elevating the hips, you reduce

the distance between your knees and the floor and allow your legs to relax. If your back bothers you, you may want to sit in a chair or against the wall.

In any event, judge your own capacity realistically. It is far better to sit in a chair than to spend your entire class focused on your discomfort instead of your inner work, fidgeting and distracting the people around you. Hatha yoga will help to stretch and strengthen your body so you can meditate without being distracted. (See Hatha Yoga chapter for some simple movements to assist sitting.) Classes and tapes on hatha are available at the Institute.

Bowing: It is traditional to begin a class or meditation period by bowing, as a sign of respect to the inner Self. This can be done either by bending at the waist as you sit cross-legged, or, before you sit, by kneeling and touching your head to the floor. If you sit in a chair, you may bow by holding your hands in front your chest, palm to palm (namaste), and bowing your head.

The important understanding about bowing is that we do not bow to a person, and we do not bow to the pictures, the teachers, or any other object in the meditation room. We bow to our inner Self. Bowing is a symbolic representation of our profound respect for that Self and for the process we are about to engage.

Class: Classes begin with a simple ceremony called arati, accompanied by chanting. In the mornings, incense and a candle are placed on a tray and then waved in a circular motion in front of the statue of Bhagavan Nityananda. In the evenings, arati is done by the waving of incense and a coconut in front of the teaching stand; the coconut is then cracked open and placed on the stand where it is filled with flowers.

The shell of the coconut in this simple ceremony is a symbol for the hard shell of our hearts which, when opened, reveals its sweetness.

Chanting is concurrent with arati, and begins and ends with the Sanskrit phrase "Sadgurunath maharaj ki jai," meaning "Hail to the universal power that manifests as the inner Teacher."

End of Class: Class ends after the gong has been struck seven times. Following class, we observe a period of silence (15-20 minutes) so that we can better absorb and digest the effects of the class. Sit quietly and let your relaxation deepen. Allow a sense of gratitude to arise for the grace and energy you have just had the opportunity to participate in and experience.

When you are ready, bow and return your pillow to the foyer. You are welcome to stay for dinner on any class night, or breakfast in the mornings (see below for details).

THE THREE TYPES OF CLASSES

MORNING MEDITATION

Morning Meditation begins when the curtain in front of the statue of Bhagavan Nityananda is opened and arati is offered. The class begins with fifteen minutes of chanting, followed by thirty minutes of silent meditation.

Morning class ends with the closing of the curtain and the striking of the gong seven times. Remain sitting quietly with your eyes closed, until the ringing is finished; ask to absorb your experience deeply.

Morning meditation is a wonderful way to start the day. It gives us an opportunity to open our hearts and connect to the source of our life as the day begins. With that perspective, we move out into our work in the world.

EVENING MEDITATION

Evening Meditation begins with a welcoming announcement from a member of the Institute, followed by a short reading from a spiritual text. Chanting then begins, and arati is performed. The evening chant lasts about fifteen minutes and is followed by forty minutes of meditation with eyes closed.

Meditation classes are your opportunity to work deeply with the techniques you have learned, in an environment that supports and enhances your experience. Practice the breathing exercise with care and devotion, visualizing the expansion of the chakras. Cherish these opportunities to do your inner work; they will serve you very well.

Evening class ends when the gong is struck seven times. Again, a period of silence is observed until dinner is served.

EYES-OPEN CLASS

Eyes-open class with a teacher also begins with <arati> and fifteen minutes of chanting. You are advised to arrive from twenty to thirty minutes early for these classes in order to have time to relax deeply and prepare to receive the energy from this direct contact with the teacher. Since contact through the eyes is an essential part of this class, be sure you are seated where you will be able to see the teacher clearly.

The teacher (Swamiji or his assistant, Steven Ott) arrives after chanting and sits at the front of the room. You should maintain a soft, steady focus on the teacher throughout the open-eyes portion of the class, even when he is not looking directly at you.

This portion of the class ends when the teacher closes his eyes and the gong is struck once. Close your eyes also and sit quietly, asking to absorb your experience, and feeling gratitude for the opportunity.

On evenings when Swamiji teaches, he may walk around the room giving shaktipat through the touch at this time, or he may give a short talk on some aspect of our practice. During shaktipat, it is important to keep your eyes closed and your attention focused inside. You may open your eyes during a talk, but keep your attention centered inside.

After the teacher has left the room, the gong will be struck seven times, indicating that class has ended. As always, maintain silence until dinner is served, and remain quiet and centered as you move into the balance of your day.

OTHER REGULAR PROGRAMS

In addition to the on-going classes just described, the Institute offers a range of special programs, retreats, and presentations. Many of these are described below. Specific times and locations are given in the Program Brochure that is produced six times a year, and sent to everyone on our mailing list. For more information, contact your introductory instructor or the Institute offices directly (617-497-6263).

1. MEDITATION ENRICHMENT SERIES

Students often find that they have many questions as they start their practice. This series of hour-and-a-half seminars was developed to supplement the Introductory Class by giving students a chance to explore several important topics carefully and in depth. The topics include: The Student-Teacher Relationship, Seva, Health and Lifestyle, Hatha Yoga, Kashmir Shaivism, Meditation, Pranayama, and Chanting. The seminars are taught by senior students of the Institute and are offered three or four times a year; for specific dates, times, and fees, see your Program Brochure.

2. HATHA YOGA PROGRAM

The Institute offers a full schedule of evening hatha yoga instruction for all levels of students, from beginning to intermediate and advanced. As we discussed in the Hatha Yoga section earlier, asana and pranayama practice is an excellent preparation for meditation. By releasing tension and fatigue in the body, quieting the mind through concentration and focus, and purifying body and mind through coordinated breath and movement, this practice will amply reward beginning and advanced students alike.

Hatha yoga classes are held at 11 Linnaean Street, the building diagonally across from the meditation hall. Sessions are 8-weeks long; dates, times, and fees are given in the Program Brochure.

3. CAMBRIDGE RETREATS

Approximately five times a year, the Institute offers weekend retreats in Cambridge, led by Swamiji. See your Program Brochure for date, time, and fee information.

Participating in a retreat is a wonderful way to begin or deepen your association with Swamiji and with the Institute. For newcomers the retreat program is an in-depth introduction to kundalini yoga and meditation as well as a chance, during darshan, to meet Swamiji. For others, it is a time of renewal and reconnection. For everyone, it is an extraordinary opportunity to personally experience the mysterious, joyous, and life-changing merging of teacher and student in the Self.

4. PHILOSOPHY COURSES AND SEMINARS

From time to time, Swamiji or a designated senior student will lead courses or seminars on specific texts in the tradition of Kashmir Shaivism. These courses are eagerly awaited by those of us who have participated in the past, because the clarity of Swamiji's exposition cuts through all the complexities, and reveals the simple, pure connections to our own personal experience. The ancient texts are no longer obscure exercises in dry scholarship, but speak directly to us today.

These courses are announced at the Institute and through mailings as well as through listings in the Program Brochure.

MISCELLANY

ABOUT MEALS

Cooking at the Institute is vegetarian (dairy and eggs are used), wholesome, simple, and pleasing. Alternative dishes of simple vegetables and grains are available to those with special dietary restrictions.

The Institute kitchen staff prepares breakfast and dinner for residents and those attending class. You are welcome to join us for these meals; the suggested donation is \$3.00 for breakfast and \$5.00 for dinner or Sunday brunch. Trays are used for all meals.

If you have breakfast at the Institute, please wash your own tray and dishes. At brunch and dinner, bring your tray and dishes into the kitchen where the seva volunteers assigned to that shift are responsible for cleanup.

USE OF THE INSTITUTE KITCHEN BEFORE AND AFTER CLASS

The Institute kitchen is open for coffee or tea before evening class ONLY from 5:45 pm until 6:30 pm. Students are asked to speak softly when in the kitchen in order to respect others as they prepare for the evening session. The kitchen is closed to everyone from 6:30 pm until after class. Generally, about twenty minutes after class, dinner is ready and the kitchen doors are opened.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AT THE OFFICES OF THE NITYANANDA INSTITUTE AND RUDRA PRESS

The Institute's administrative offices are located on the fourth floor of 2067 Massachusetts Avenue in Cambridge, just off Porter Square (Porter Square T-stop). Rudra Press, the Institute's book production and publishing arm, is at the same location. You are welcome to drop by or call.

Your volunteer time is always greatly appreciated; we can use help in everything from preparing bulk mailings to transcribing talks, from computerized bookkeeping to putting up posters, from proofing galleys to xeroxing texts. If you have some free time and would like to help, we would be delighted to see you -- see below:

Business hours: 9:00 am to 5:30 pm
Institute phone: (617) 497-6263.
Rudra Press phone: (617) 576-3394.

CONTINUING ASSOCIATION WITH THE NITYANANDA INSTITUTE

The cost for your Introductory Class includes the tuition for your first month at the Institute. At the end of that first month, you will receive a notice asking if you wish to continue to participate (quarterly tuition is \$75). Initially, you may continue on a month-by-month basis.

Your tuition fee gives you the following benefits: access to a true teacher in the form of Swamiji, the support of a lineage and tradition that stretches back for thousands of years, the opportunity to practice with others in the regular morning and evening classes as well as in special programs and retreats, and the support of a community dedicated to discovering and unfolding the very highest potential of each participant. You also receive Rudra, the Institute's quarterly magazine, along with information on special Institute programs and events, and selected discounts, for example, on retreats and Tape of the Month Club membership.

THE RESIDENCE PROGRAM

Some participants will want to consider entering our residential program. The only real prerequisite is a sincere and demonstrated commitment to your own spiritual growth, pursued in the context of Swamiji's teachings and the Institute's programs. Residence in our community is a privilege conferred by Swamiji; his permission is required. If you are interested in this aspect of our practice, and have been attending classes and programs for some time, the first step in the process is to write to Swamiji and ask his permission. You should also contact Sharon Ward, Executive Director of the Institute, for further information. She can be reached at the Institute offices (see above).

SPECIAL OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE AND TO SERVE

SEVA: HOUSE JOBS, SERVICE WEEKEND, PROJECT VOLUNTEERING

The integration of meditation into our daily life is one of the goals of our practice. That is, when we have a practice, we do not see ourselves living two separate existences -- one in class and the other when we leave class. Rather we attempt to bring the principles and values of meditation to every part of our lives, to our everyday world.

This effort is called seva or service, and it can take many forms. One form of seva is service to the spiritual community where we practice. Many practitioners, for example, do seva by volunteering to do some of the regular tasks that need to be done around the Institute. Called "house jobs," these include such tasks as helping on morning and/or evening meal clean-up, tending a garden regularly, or cleaning a common room weekly.

Another seva opportunity is participating in the Institute's monthly Service Weekend (usually the second weekend of the month). The work done on that weekend contributes to the maintenance and upkeep of the various program spaces, grounds, and residences. Seva always gives its own bounteous return and for those who participate, service weekends prove to be a great way to get to know other people at the Institute and have some fun.

A third opportunity is volunteering for jobs or projects at the Institute offices. The programs and goals of the Institute are always expanding. Volunteering frequently bridges the gap between the vision and its realization. People who volunteer their time and effort at the Institute offices are usually given as much responsibility as they desire -- everything from transcribing to graphic design, from proofreading to managing a translation project. Seva is an excellent chance to put your skills to use or to learn new ones.

Whichever opportunity appeals to you, seva volunteering is greatly appreciated and is a way to put something back into the environment that serves us all. Please call the office if you would like to help, and a staff person will point you in the right direction.

FRIENDS OF THE INSTITUTE

There are many ways to express gratitude for the opportunity to develop spiritually. Giving to the FRIENDS of the Institute is one such way. FRIENDS is the Institute's resource development arm. When you make a donation to the Institute and become a FRIEND, you express tangible support for the goals and programs of the Institute and provide some part of the extensive resources needed for the growth and expansion of its cultural, educational, and publishing activities. As a FRIEND, you also receive regular issues of the FRIENDS newsletter, The Institute News.

The Institute is deeply grateful for the many gifts that practitioners, supporters, and the public-at-large have given to FRIENDS. These have included yearly pledges, the donation of stocks and bonds, tithing, outright cash gifts, and in-kind contributions, large and small. Because the Nityananda Institute is a not-for-profit tax exempt organization under Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, your contributions may be tax-deductible.

PART FIVE

Glossary

For Further Reading

GLOSSARY

These terms are defined in the context of our practice and this manual; many terms have further or differing meanings in other contexts that are not listed.

Abhinavagupta - Eleventh century Kashmir Shaivite scholar/saint; one of the major writers in the tradition of Kashmir Shaivism. Some of his ecstatic poetry is quoted in this manual.

arati - Sanskrit; literally "light:" the ritual waving of light and incense before a holy statue, picture, or place. At the Institute, a simple ceremony at the beginning of meditation class.

asana - Sanskrit; literally, "seat;" now refers to any pose or posture in hatha yoga. The Sanskrit names of poses always end in "asana"; for example, *tadasana* (the basic standing pose) or *dandasana* (the basic sitting pose).

avadhut/a - Sanskrit; refers to a holy man or woman who is so totally established in the universal Self that external matters are of no importance. Bhagavan Nityananda is honored as an avadhut.

chakra - Sanskrit; literally "wheel" or "circle." Subtle energy centers that you can experience during your practice. Swamiji has said that the chakras are the gateways between the inner and the outer. Diagram on p. 32.

Chetanananda - [Swamiji]; literally, his name means "the bliss ["ananda"] of universal consciousness ["chetan"]

Consciousness - when capitalized, refers to the essence of all that is, the Absolute, the Self, etc. Consciousness is, and we (and all objects and all experiences) arise from it and subside into it. The image of an "ocean of Consciousness" is often used to describe this concept. See "Our Understanding" in Part One for a detailed discussion. See also Self, Shiva.

guru - Sanskrit; teacher. See teacher.

hatha yoga - we use this term to designate the practice combining postures [asana] and breath awareness [pranayama] in a form of physical exercise that harmonizes and purifies body and mind.

ida - one of three major nadis, or subtle currents of energy, that form the chakras and the subtle body. See also pingala, sushumna.

Kashmir - region of northern India where the non-dualistic philosophy called Kashmir Shaivism was developed.

Kashmir Shaivism - A philosophy that is called "non-dualistic" because its central premise is that the source and substance of all objects and all experience is one: Consciousness, the Self, Shiva. It remains viable to us today because the primary authority of the philosophy is the direct experience of its practitioners: you and I. See "Our Understanding" for further discussion. Also, see Bibliography for further reading.

kundalini - our individualized creative energy; the vital essence of our being. See "Our Understanding" for a more detailed discussion.

kundalini yoga - a form of yoga ["union" - refers to the union of the individual and the divine] that focuses on arousing the individual's awareness of their own creative energy [kundalini]. See also "Our Understanding."

lineage - literally, the line of teaching traced through teacher to student. In Swamiji's words: "Lineage is not material, [it] is a field of spiritual energy, a connection to timelessness and to the divine Presence that is all pervasive."

mantra - words or sounds invested with the power to transform those who repeat them; in a larger sense, the pulsation of Life Itself.

hatha yoga - we use this term to designate the practice combining postures [asana] and breath awareness [pranayama] in a form of physical exercise that harmonizes and purifies body and mind.

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mantra - words or sounds invested with the power to transform those who repeat them; in a larger sense, the pulsation of Life Itself.

meditation - strictly speaking, meditation is a state, an experience of the universal pure awareness that is the vitality and foundation of our own individual life and of Life Itself. See also "Our Method and Techniques."

nadi - subtle energy current or nerve; the three major ones are the ida, pingala, and sushumna. See also chakra.

Nityananda - literally, the bliss of the eternal. Bhagavan Nityananda of Ganeshpuri is one of the teachers in our lineage, and the namesake of the Institute.

pingala - one of three major nadis, or subtle currents of energy, that form the chakras and the subtle body. See also ida, sushumna, and chakra.

pranayama - the science of breath [prana].

Presence - used as a synonym for Consciousness, Self, the Absolute; refers to the state of meditation in which the individual is merged seamlessly with the divine. See "Method and Techniques." See also Consciousness, Self, and Shiva.

Rudi (Rudrananda) - Swamiji's teacher; Rudi is a unique figure in Western spirituality who worked tirelessly on himself, incorporating years of study with great teachers of several traditions with his own powerful experience.

Sadgurunath maharaj ki jai - Sanskrit; Swamiji translates this traditional phrase as: "Hail to the Universal Guru that manifests as the inner Teacher."

Self - when capitalized, refers to the single essence that is at the core of all of us; some other equivalent terms are: Consciousness, Universal Consciousness, the Absolute, pure Awareness, Shiva, Presence.

Shakti - when capitalized, the dynamic aspect of the Absolute; the inseparably interpenetrated pair of Shiva [pure awareness] and Shakti [pure creative energy] are the essential aspects of the One

Consciousness [Paramashiva or Shiva].

In uncapitalized form, refers to various forms of energy, such as kundalini-shakti, chitta-shakti, and so on. See "Our Understanding" in Part One. See also Shiva.

shaktipat - Sanskrit; "transmission (or descent) of the teaching (or energy);" contact with the living Presence of this awakened force (shakti) in another human being. This transmission takes place through look, touch, thought, and word. See "Our Understanding" in Part One and also discussion of Eyes-Open Class with the Teacher in Part Two.

Shiva - the "pure awareness" aspect of Consciousness. In Kashmir Shaivism [Shiva-ism], the One Consciousness itself is also called Shiva, although the more correct (and less confusing) term is "Paramashiva" [the highest Shiva]. See "Our Understanding" in Part One. See also Shakti.

sushumna - one of three major nadis, or subtle currents of energy, that form the chakras and the subtle body. See chakra for a more complete definition.

Swami - Sanskrit; literally "master of one's Self," it is both a title of honor for a religious person and a specifically conferred title in certain traditions.

Teacher - a spiritual person who has cultivated the understanding of the highest state and manifests it fully. In a spiritual context, a teacher is much more than an instructor; established in the highest state, a spiritual teacher lives the teaching and imparts it not only through words, but also through look, thought, and action. See also shaktipat.

yoga - literally, "union" or "to yoke"; a generic term for the process or pursuit of union between individual and divine -- there are many different forms and schools of yoga, but all have as their objective this essential union.

FOR FURTHER READING

RUDRA

An excellent supplemental reading resource for new and old students alike is the Rudra magazine. Published quarterly, Rudra includes articles by Swamiji, reprints of writings by Rudi and Nityananda, and articles by many writers on living a spiritual life in a modern context. Regular features cover hatha yoga and wellness. Back issues are available; call Rudra Press (617/576-3394) for details.

Philosophy: The Foundation Texts

The following four titles are essential texts of Kashmir Shaivism. These books will challenge your understanding and sometimes your patience, but are well worth the effort. Note that the introductions by the translator give excellent overviews that are very helpful to the beginner. The courses given by Swamiji from time to time on Kashmir Shaivism really bring these ancient teachings to life and give us an opportunity to experience the vitality and depth of these teachings today.

Pratyabhijnahrdyam: The Secret of Self-Recognition translated by Jaideva Singh

Motilal Banarsidass: Delhi, 1980 (3rd ed)

Writings under the heading of "pratyabhijna" are considered to be the philosophy proper of Kashmir Shaivism. This work is a digest of the main principles of the system, focusing on the nature of the Absolute and the process of worldly manifestation.

Good introduction by the translator which gives an overview of the Kashmir Shaivite philosophy.

Shiva Sutras: The Yoga of Supreme Identity translated by Jaideva Singh

Motilal Banarsidass: Delhi, 1979

This essential text of Kashmir Shaivism outlines the strategies for liberation or stages of growth [upayas] that you will experience as you practice your inner work. The introduction to this text is especially helpful for a concise overview of the philosophy.

Spanda Karikas: The Divine Creative Pulsation

translated by Jaideva Singh

Motilal Banarsidass: Delhi, 1980

Focuses on the dynamic aspect of the Self called Shakti or pure energy. This text explores the means to liberation through an understanding of Spanda, the initial throb or dynamic essence of the Self. Includes instruction in the role of mantra and the process of manifestation.

Vijnanabhairava or Divine Consciousness

translated by Jaideva Singh

Motilal Banarasidass: Delhi, 1979

A treasury of 112 different yoga practices from the ancient tantras. These practices or more accurately, moments of illumination, provide concrete examples of the "upayas" or stages of understanding explained in the Shiva Sutras.

Philosophy: General Titles

The Bhagavad Gita

Juan Mascaro, translator.

Penguin Books, 1962.

Part of the Indian religio-historic epic, the Mahabharata, the Gita is a dialogue between Arjuna, hero of the epic, and Lord Krishna, who has manifested as Arjuna's charioteer. The primary question is the very practical one of "How shall I live my life in order to satisfy both God and man?" A beautiful classical work, extensively quoted throughout Indian literature. The simple clarity of the Gita makes it accessible to the beginning student. This Penguin edition is both reliable and easily available.

The Concise Yoga Vasistha

Swami Venkatesananda

This ancient text reflects influences from Kashmir Shaivism, Buddhism and Hinduism. Through a series of poetic fables, philosophical discourses and fascinating stories, the sage Vasistha instructs Rama on the journey to liberation.

The Doctrine of Vibration: An Analysis of the Doctrines and Practices of Kashmir Shaivism

Mark Dyczkowski

SUNY Press, 1987

Recently published, this work uses extensive references to many of the texts and scriptures of Kashmir Shaivism as it delves into the dynamic, pulsating aspect of Consciousness called Spanda. It also explores Shiva and Shakti, the Shakti Chakra, and the Upayas or paths to liberation. Very scholarly in tone; not recommended for beginners.

Kashmir Shaivism

J.C. Chatterji

SUNY Press,

Originally published in 1914, Chatterji's work is one of the earliest English-language works on Kashmir Shaivism. It focuses on the nature of ultimate reality and the manifestation of the universe according to this system. Includes a clear description of the "tattvas," the principles or categories of manifestation, and a good chronology of Kashmir Shaivism.

Nitya Sutras: Revelations of Nityananda from the Chidakash Gita

M.U. Hatengdi and Swami Chetanananda

Also listed under "Lineage" below, we include the Nitya Sutras under philosophy as well on the strength of the excellent introduction written by Swamiji. This outline is a clear and thorough exposition of the philosophy behind Nityananda's teachings and our practice.

"The Symphony of Life"

Swami Chetanananda

Article in The American Theosophist, Vol. 73, No. 5 (1985), 152-164.

Thorough, straightforward summary of the science of mantra written for the lay reader. Reprints are available through Rudra Press.

Lineage

The Breath of God

Swami Chetanananda

Rudra Press, 1987

Edited from Swamiji's talks, this collection of short essays captures both his wisdom and his direct, no-nonsense style of speaking. For those of you who know Swamiji, these talks will be a welcome reminder of his Presence. For everyone, this book tackles questions ranging from the nature of ultimate reality to how to deal with your children. It is an essential guide for spiritual students of any tradition that prods, cajoles, and inspires us to fulfill our creative potential.

Nityananda: The Divine Presence

M.U. Hatengdi

Cambridge, Mass.: Rudra Press, 1983.

Namesake of the Institute, and a major figure in our lineage, Nityananda is widely known in India, but had not been thoroughly represented in the English language until the publication of these two volumes [see also Nitya Sutras]. Prepared from stories gathered by a life-long devotee, the collection is vivid and highly readable. Also included are several maps and illustrations as well as over 40 rare photographs.

Nitya Sutras: Revelations of Nityananda from the Chidakash Gita

M.U. Hatengdi and Swami Chetanananda

Cambridge, Mass.: Rudra Press, 1984.

Blank verse renderings of Nityananda's own words, carefully taken down by devotees in the early 1920s. Powerful and direct, the Sutras are clearly inspired work. Swamiji's introduction to the Sutras is a lucid, concise summary of the Trika system, highlighted by frequent references to the sutras themselves.

Songs from the Center of the Well

Swami Chetanananda

Cambridge, Mass.: Rudra Press, 1984.

Timeless wisdom with an American accent. Accessible and direct, these blank-verse songs are readable and quotable. Like the highest teachings of any school, the songs are universal in content but thoroughly familiar in form. You will find your Self in its pages.

Spiritual Cannibalism

Rudi (Swami Rudrananda)

Woodstock, New York: Overlook Press, 1978.

Rudi's own book, and an American spiritual classic. One of the great strengths of Rudi's work is his rock-steady grounding in daily life. In his guide to spiritual living, there is no hiding from the world, no hermitic retreat, no ascetic distancing from the rough and tumble of urban America. Rudi speaks to us directly about finding God here and now: in our homes, on the freeway, in our jobs, in the city.

Don't miss it; you will be amazed!

Poetry

The Kabir Book Robert Bly, Boston: Beacon Press, 1977.

Modern rendering of some verses by the famous fifteenth century ecstatic poet. While some scholars dispute the reliability of Bly's "translations," they are highly readable, beautifully capturing the breathtaking images of the ecstatic poets.

Other well-known ecstatic poets include: Rumi, Mirabai, Lalleshwari, and Tukarama. Rudra Press carries a number of excellent volumes of ecstatic poetry, particularly the works of Rumi.

Hatha Yoga: Asana and Pranayama

The Concise Light on Yoga, rev. ed. B.K.S. Iyengar. New York: Schocken Books, 1976.

An abridged version of the accepted reference book on hatha yoga, this encyclopedic work is indispensable, although it is not recommended as a self-teaching guide for the practice of hatha yoga (especially not for the beginner). The "Introduction" contains a superb (and brief) exposition of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras and the eight limbs of ashtanga yoga, placing hatha yoga in context as a preparation for meditation and, ultimately, liberation.

Hatha Yoga for Meditators, as taught in Siddha
meditation ashrams.

SYDA Foundation, 1985

A good simple guide for a complete range of
postures. Spiral bound - easy to practice with.
Gives relaxation and breathing exercises.
Excellent for beginners.

Hatha Yoga in Motion (AUDIO TAPES, Level 1 and Level 2),

Nityananda Institute

Two tapes, 30 minutes/side

If you need some structure for your hatha practice
at home, these 30-minute taped sessions could be
the answer. Prepared by the Institute's teaching
staff, these tapes teach you the basics of several
vinyasas [asana sequences linked by breath].
Suitable for beginning and intermediate students.

Lilias! Alive with Yoga (VIDEO TAPES)

Lilias Folan

Nityananda Institute, 1987

[30 minutes each side]

VOL 1: Especially for beginners; introduces the
basics necessary for a daily practice in Lilias'
inimitable style. High quality video.

VOL 2: A challenging set of two 30-minute practice
sessions for the experienced students. Faster pace and
greater depth than volume one -- a good follow up.

Religiousness in Yoga

TKV Desikachar

University Press of America, Lanham MD, 1980

Philosophical discussion along with asana tips.
Great for the intermediate student who wants to
take his or her understanding further.

Stretch and Relax

Tobias and Stewart

Brody Press, AZ

Workout book with five different 20-minute programs
for daily use. Beautifully illustrated; includes
chapters on relieving stress and stiffness,
relaxation, and program of stretches for pregnant
women. Great for intermediate to advanced
students.

Yoga for the West

Ian Rawlinson

A brand new title from one of the foremost students of the Desikachar vinyasa method. A great reference book and a thorough introduction to the method. Takes a functional approach to yoga (rather than form, which has been the tendency in the West). Opens exciting new possibilities. Especially for advanced students and teachers (not an introductory book; assumes thorough knowledge of asanas and focuses on sequencing and approach).

Total Well-Being: Books on Health and Lifestyle

Nutrition:

The following titles and descriptions are excerpted from a three-article series on nutrition printed in Rudra in 1988. The series was written by Rachel Brooks, M.D.; reprints will be available soon through Rudra Press.

Lick the Sugar Habit

Nancy Appleton, Ph.D.

Santa Monica: Choice Pub Co, 1985

Don't be mislead by the title; filled with sound information about food allergies, the immune system and the effects of sugar and other substances we eat on the body. Lots of good, practical suggestions.

Jane Brody's Nutrition Book, Rev. Ed.

Jane Brody

New York: Bantam Books, 1987

Broad spectrum of subjects; very practical orientation. A drawback: takes a moderate stance, only slightly more broad-minded than traditional medicine. Compare to any of the other books on this page before you draw your conclusions.

Food Allergies

Neil Orenstein, Ph.D. and Sarah Bingham, M.S.

Good "how-to" book for discovering your food sensitivities. Presents an organized and simplified approach. Makes it sound a bit easier and more sure-fire than most people's experience, but a sound and useful method.

The Pritikin Program for Diet and Exercise

Nathan Pritikin

New York: Bantam Books, 1980

Describes a good, healthful diet. Sound discussion of the standard over-consumption of protein, fat, and sugar. More restrictive than many may need to undertake (very limited fat intake), but a good guidepost to aim towards. With practical suggestions on making a standard diet more healthful.

An Alternative Approach to Allergies

Theron G. Randolph, M.D.

New York: Bantam Books, 1982

Dr. Randolph is one of the "fathers" of clinical ecology. Discusses in depth the problems that can be caused by food allergies and chemical sensitivities. Presents a strict version of the concept of rotating foods, along with a chart of related food families. Good bibliography and references.

Stress Management/Relaxation:

A brief list of noteworthy titles; all are available through Rudra Press or your local bookstore.

Relaxation & Stress Reduction Workbook

Davis, Eshelman, McKay

The Relaxation Response

Herbert Benson, M.D.

Beyond the Relaxation Response

Herbert Benson, M.D.

Q.R.: The Quieting Reflex

Charles F. Stroebel, M.D.

